



DRAWN FROM LIFE.

BY

ARCHIBALD FORBES,

SPECIAL MILITARY CORRESPONDENT OF THE DAILY NEWS.

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CHAPTER I.

THERE are many fairer and more romantic glens in the Highlands of Scotland than Glenfiloch. Nevertheless, it is not without a certain sombre beauty of its own. Heather-clad hills of moderate height, the spurs from the giant range of mountains which tower aloft further inland, encircle it on every side. Down the side of one of these tumbles, now in a sheer waterfall, now in a succession of turbulent rapids, a stream which has its rise in a loch or tarn in a gloomy recess of one of the mountains of

the more distant range. Down into the bottom of the glen it plunges, with a glad-some leap, as if it joyed at its emancipation at last from the thralldom of the hill, and gloried in the comparative quietude which is awaiting it, as it babbles lightsomely along between the level haughs of the low grounds. These are by no means extensive. The hills are greedy and intrusive, and the heather refuses to be banished away far up their sides, but comes down aggressively upon the cultivated land, till at points it threatens to renew its intimate acquaintance with the burn. Then it is baffled again. The stream, its margin clad with the alders and the birkin, which here and there at a narrow part interlace their branches above it, and ever delight to dip their boughs into its sprightly waters, takes a sheer away to the right or the left, leaves the heather

threatening it impotently, and makes an elbow for a few acres of flat cultivated land upon which stands a modest farmhouse, or the more humble habitation of a cottar. The inhabited portion of the glen is indeed composed of a succession of those haughs, almost isolated one from the other by the intervening encroachments of the hills, which at one or two spots seem almost about making up their minds to coalesce, and bar the progress of the stream altogether. It, however, perhaps from its early experience of tarn life upon the cold shoulder of Ben-A-Bourach, manifests a strong dislike to be thus summarily converted into a lake, and has eaten its way right manfully through the red clay and the rocks of the projecting hills, asserting for itself a right of way along which—for after all it is, so to speak, but a watery footpath—it hisses and boils defi-

antly, till it is out of its troubles once more, and out among the haughs again. Then it acts as if it were entitled to a little relaxation after its battle. It expands itself in reckless ripples and wide shallows over its stony bed, as if conscious that the necessity is over for concentration of its energies, and jogs along merrily past the gables of the farmhouses, and along the foot of the minister's garden, till it finds itself at the further end of the glen, and at the commencement of a fresh peck of troubles to be encountered before it makes its way out of it, and down into the wide valley of the Spey.

About the centre of one of these alluvial haughs stands the manse and church of Glenfiloch, both modest, primitive buildings. Some of the windows of the manse look out into the churchyard, and across it toward

the purpled heathery side of the hills; others open into the pretty little flower-garden lying between the manse and the stream.

It was at one of the latter that one morning in the month of May were sitting a grey-haired old man and a fair young girl. David Home had lived in the Manse of Glenfiloch for the last thirty years. When a young man first licensed to the ministry, he had received the offer of ministering to the spiritual wants of the simple inhabitants of Glenfiloch. It was but a straggling Highland parish, with a very low range of hills. Young Home, although as good blood as any in Scotland was in his veins, was poor, and comparatively friendless, and was glad to accept any engagement that would place him in a position of independence, however modest. He was an able man, and full of

legitimate ambition. In the heyday of his young strength, both of body and mind, he doubted not that his repute would extend throughout the land, and that ere long he would be called from the hill parish to another sphere. But he was mistaken. Whether he had overrated himself, or whether the stern independence of his character operated to his detriment with patrons who, as a rule, have no objection to a little sycophancy, it matters not to decide; but certain it is that year after year and decade after decade rolled over David Home's head, and found him still the minister of Glenfiloch. To say he ever got reconciled to his sphere would be untrue, but in course of time he became accustomed to it. He married, and strove to console himself for his disappointment by assiduous attention to the spiritual wants of his little

sequestered flock, and in the congenial society of an accomplished, loving, pious helpmate. To some extent he was successful, and his married life was the happiest period of his existence. Children blessed the union, and as they grew up, it was the delight of the minister to act as their instructor, spending hours daily lovingly over the pleasant task, and living his boyhood's days over again in his children. But this gleam of happiness was not destined to be enduring. As child after child reached its twelfth year, it succumbed to the fatal malady, the seeds of which were latent in the mother's constitution, and the little mounds in the minister's corner of the quiet kirkyard, as they increased in number, were each a memorial of a terrible blow to the father's heart. At length a larger grave had to be dug in the corner, and, severest pang of all to the

misfortune-smitten man, he had to lay the faithful wife of his bosom among the dead pledges of their love. She had not, however, left him all forlorn in the world. A fair young girl of some nine years of age still remained to console the desolate minister; but, with the fatal twelfth year before his eyes, he strove—yet strove in vain—to prevent himself from concentrating the fulness of his affection upon one whose doom he instinctively read in her striking likeness to her dead mother. But the dreaded crisis passed auspiciously, and Mary grew in healthful beauty as she approached the threshold of womanhood. She was the very apple of her father's eye, the breath of his nostrils; and she tenderly reciprocated the old man's fondness.

And what of this daughter? For she it was who was her father's companion at the

window of the modest sitting-room of the Glenfiloch Manse. She deserves some description at our hands, for she is to be our heroine—yet the task is no easy one. Mary Home was very different from the generic type of “Scottish lassie,” with “bricht blue e’en, lint-white locks,” and all the rest of it, down to the “dimple on her bonnie chin.” Her mother had been an Hebridian. In the Western Isles still linger some traces of the Spanish blood originally engrafted on the Celtic stock by some waifs cast up out of the deep, when certain of the tall ships of the Spanish Armada made shipwreck upon the rockbound shores. A strain of this blood was in the veins of Mary’s mother, although in her it was latent ; for she was light-haired and of a *blonde* complexion. But in the daughter it had re-asserted itself with singular power. When you gazed on Mary,

the idea always struck you that the mantilla was her appropriate dress. Her profusion of glossy hair was jetty as the raven's wing. Her full liquid black eyes appeared all the blacker from the long dark lashes which overhung them, casting a shadow upon the cheek. Underneath the rich brown of her complexion mantled the red blood, deepening and fading again in unison with the passing emotion of the moment. As for the dainty mouth, with its ripe, pouting lips, the upper one short and curving, the lower one gliding into the firm, short chin, it were hard indeed to find a suitable comparison whereunto to liken it. A rosebud might answer as regards colour, but the idea of a meaningless simper is inseparately associated with the simile, which would be quite out of place. There was plenty of character about Mary's mouth, rich, ripe, and kissable as it looked. That

bow of an upper lip could on occasion put on an expression of most ineffable disdain, and then the liquidity of the black eyes would become liquid fire, and the dainty brow would knit, and the face flush darkly, as the rich blood struggled through the olive skin; and again, when softer emotion had the sway, a quiver about the muscles at the corner of the mouth would be discernible, the eyes would melt in their swimming softness, and the cheek pale perceptibly. But Mary's temperament was, on the whole, a gladsome, cheery one, and the prevailing characteristic of her mouth, which, with her eyes, was the character-feature of her face, was that of a half-malicious, droll archness, evinced in the tiny upward curl at the corners. There were, indeed, sundry envious young ladies of her acquaintance who would have it that this expression, to which we have given the

name of archness, was really a horribly sarcastic one, and, taking it as an index to character, that Mary was never so happy as when she was quizzing somebody or something ; but for all their sneering, the tiny upward curl at the corners of her mouth never straightened a jot, and Mary went on her way merrily through the world. In figure she was *petite*, yet not very small ; slender and lithe, yet without a single angle in any of her flowing outlines ; with a throat like a swan ; a foot and ankle—like what ? like nothing mundane we can conjure up as a comparison. In short, Mary was a bright, pleasant, lovable girl of nineteen, with nothing angelic about her, for she was a thorough woman, both in her good qualities and in her faults, but just a dear, sweet, charming, tantalizing, fascinating girl, who had a trick somehow of leaving her image graven on the retina of your

eye and mind for long after you were out of her society. Perhaps her besetting sin was pride ; not a dirty, petty conceit about trivialities connected with herself, but a touchiness on the subject of any fancied slight offered to her father, resulting in an independence of spirit which was occasionally, perhaps, rather too assertive. Somehow, in a chance, piecemeal kind of way, Mary had contrived to learn a great deal, although she had never had a governess, and had never been to school ; and, although she could hardly have been termed accomplished in the conventional sense of the term, she knew much that one of your “accomplished” young ladies is wholly ignorant of. A born musician, she had cultivated her natural taste till her repute as a sweet singer was quite widely diffused ; and although as regarded instrumental music she laboured

under the double disadvantage of having no instrument to practise on save an antediluvian piano, and a terrible scarcity of the newest pieces, her exquisite ear and correct taste enabled her in a great measure to overcome those drawbacks. She had not read quite so many novels as an average young lady of the world, not because she did not hunger and thirst, womanlike, after this species of literary fare, but for the simple reason that it was out of her power to procure the run of "Mudie's"; but it may be said for her, and reckoned to her advantage or the reverse, according to taste, that she read with avidity anything in the form of a novel that came in her way. For the rest, she was an excellent botanist, a capital pedestrian, and as good a horsewoman, her usual "mount" being a wicked little rascal of a Highland pony; and she was a constant companion of her father,

whether in his walks throughout his straggling parish, or in his cosy little study when he was writing his sermon for the week. She contrived to see a little society at intervals—on occasions of visits to the county town, or to the houses of the resident gentry in the neighbourhood, where David Home was always a welcome guest, partly for his own sake, and partly for the sake of the life and sparkle with which his sprightly daughter infected every circle she entered. She was no flirt, yet many a young gentleman, in and out of the county, had a hole in his heart, through which the demurely unconscious Mary had sent a dart; yet not one of them was ever able to congratulate himself with anything approaching to assurance that he had evoked the faintest reciprocity of feeling. Save one, and he an old playmate of Mary's in their childhood's days, the son of

a wealthy laird, one of the heritors of Glenfiloch ; but he had never yet ventured, since they were children together, on spoken words of love to Mary, deep and ardent as were his feelings. Was she heart-whole ? As she sat by the window opposite her father, with the pleasant spring breeze which entered at the casement rippling her raven hair, and apparently with her whole mind engrossed in the conversation which she was maintaining with the unwontedly roused old gentleman, the keenest observer would certainly have failed to discern the faintest traces of the insidious attacks of the tiny god. But we may have further opportunity of insight into this momentous question when we have established a closer acquaintance with our fair heroine.

CHAPTER II.

“WELL, Mary,” said Mr. Home, “I must confess I cannot fathom this letter. I have not a tittle of interest with Lord Nairn, and years ago I was given to understand that I had no reason to expect any favours from him.”

“Read it aloud, papa,” answered Mary, “and let us see whether our joint penetration cannot make something of it.”

Mr. Home took an open letter off the table and read as follows :—

“Castle Stuart, May 18, 186—.

“REV. SIR,—I am instructed to inform

you that the Earl of Nairn has this day issued a presentation in your favour to the church of Fetternoon ; a very good living, as you are no doubt aware, and a much less laborious parish than your present charge. I shall be glad to hear at your early convenience of your acceptance of this mark of the Earl's esteem and appreciation of your worth, and begging, for my own part, to offer you my sincere congratulations upon an amelioration of condition which, though tardy, is thoroughly merited.

“ I am, Rev. Sir, your obedient servant,

“ DAVID BRICE,

“ Factor for the Earl of Nairn.”

“ Well, Mary, what grand result has your boasted penetration achieved, now I have read it over thus slowly and distinctly ?”

“Why, papa, I think the whole thing is obvious enough. You know Lord Nairn is residing much more at home than he used to do, and, of course, the man has got eyes and ears. I think it is clear enough—and, I say, better late than never. Your hair is white, dear papa, but you are still hale and hearty, and would bear transplanting nicely.”

“That’s not what troubles me, Mary ; but then, in this glen, poor and circumscribed as it is, I have toiled all my life. I have christened half the population of it, and more, and one and all feel toward me as toward a father. I feel as if there would be something like treachery in leaving them till I go out with my feet first.”

“Don’t talk like that, papa, please ; you will see many a happy year before you do that.”

“Ah! Mary, look out at that window in the other room, up to the clump of trees in the corner of the kirkyard, and think whether there are not ties there strong enough to bind me to Glenfiloch till I die.”

“I’ll do no such thing, papa, and I won’t allow you to use such an argument. We can drive over often from Fetternoon, and tend the graves as we always have done, and I’m sure the old parishioners, for our sakes, will see that everything is kept neat and careful about them. And, just think, at Fetternoon, papa, you will have congenial society, instead of, as here, having the alternative of chattering to a nonsensical scapegrace like me, or talking of ‘neeps’ and ‘tatietoats’ to the old farmers. Besides, just let me put in a word for myself. How much pleasanter it will be for me at Fetternoon! There is a circulating library there,

and balls and parties, and flower-shows, and everything that's nice. So I say, consider it settled!"

"Ah, ha, Mary, one word for me, and two for yourself, sly puss. I wish I really knew that this is a *bona fide* spontaneous offer of the Earl, arising from an appreciation of me, which, as the factor says, is indeed somewhat 'tardy.' If I thought that anybody had been using any backstairs influence on my behalf, I would throw it in the fire without a moment's consideration."

"Poh, poh! papa, you are too sensitive by half. Who on earth cares enough for us to use what you call 'backstairs' influence, or any other influence, on our account? No, you may depend on it, it is the Earl's own sense of right which has brought this about; and for my part, looking at everything, I

think it would be almost sinful to refuse his offer."

"How terribly impetuous you are on the subject, Mary! Let us take a walk, and talk it over as we go along. I do not like to be rash about so momentous a change. I am far from clear that it is not my duty to decline."

"And I am just as clear that it is your bounden duty to accept, and that at once. If you begin hesitating, and going out walking about, and thinking it over, you are lost. You know you have often told me that twenty years ago such a letter as this would have fulfilled the dearest wish of your heart. Just fancy yourself twenty years younger, and the fancy, if you try hard, will go a great way to make you so in reality—and like a dear, good old papa, sit down at once and write to the

factor, accepting the Earl's offer, and thanking him for the same. Here's your pen and ink."

"Well, Mary, I suppose it must be so, since you are so determined; and yet I had never thought to leave the old Manse. There's where your mother used to sit, Mary, and in the room overhead you were born and she died. Ah! Mary, I have been very wretched, it is true, in this house, but many, many a happy hour have I spent inside its four walls. My heart will bleed to leave it."

"Dear, dear father, I know it will. I love it too, and mamma's memory, but I love you better; and I am sure the change will be for your good. You know you say yourself you are getting to feel more and more like a hermit every day. Fetternoon will soon cure this. You will acknowledge I

am right before you are there six months."

Half willing to be thus impulsively persuaded, yet with a lingering reluctance, Mr. Home took up his pen, and wrote a letter of acceptance to the Earl's factor. When he had done so, it struck him that his task was but half over, since he had accepted another church without denuding himself of his present charge. So he resumed his pen, and wrote a formal letter to the patron of Glenfiloch, resigning the incumbency of that parish, and mentioning the translation which was about to take place. A son of one of Mr. Home's elders had just completed his studies at the Divinity Hall, and had been licensed as a probationer a few weeks previously. He was now teaching a school in a neighbouring parish; and, anxious to do him a good turn, Mr. Home wrote to him, notifying that he had resigned Glenfiloch,

and advising him to make immediate application to the patron in order to obtain the presentation. He had just finished this third note, when Mary re-entered the room ready dressed to accompany her father on his walk, and the pair started for the farmhouse of the young licentiate's father, on the friendly errand of informing him of the progress of events, and to advise him to get up a petition in the parish to the patron, praying for the appointment of the young native of the parish in Mr. Home's stead.

CHAPTER III.

THERE was a grand dinner-party at Sir Dugald Grant's. Sir Dugald was a gaunt, upright old warrior, seamed with many a scar and adorned with many a medal and clasp. He was the representative of an old but reduced Highland family, which a devotion to the wrong side in the '45 and a subsequent course of misfortune had reduced to a very low ebb. Dugald, when a lad of fourteen, had got a pair of colours through the interest of the chief of the clan, and was sent out into the world with his mother's blessing and a fifty-pound

note. From Walcheren to Corunna, from Torres Vedras to Toulouse, he had slowly carved his way up the ladder of promotion with his good sword and his fiery but discreet Scotch courage. He was a colonel at Waterloo, then a brigadier under Lord Gough in India, where he lost his leg and won his K.C.B.-ship. He had always been a saving man, and when he was finally put on the retired list, he had money enough to buy the old house of his family, and to maintain himself on a footing with the country gentry of his neighbourhood. Many a man would have liked a newer and more commodious residence than Feshiedale, but to Sir Dugald it was a loved and sacred spot—the house of his forefathers in its pristine integrity. It not a little resembled Sir Dugald himself in its outward characteristics—tall, grey, and narrow as it was. There

was not the sign of a tree or shrub near it. It rose in all its naked gauntness out of the middle of a heathery field, with its peaked slated roof, with little quaint pepper-boxes at each corner, and a turret, at the foot of which was the principal entrance, and up which wound the narrow tortuous staircase. The house was but one room broad, and every window in the front had a corresponding one at the back, so that there was no foundation for any complaint as to the want of through lights, whatever there may have been on the score of draughts.

Sir Dugald stood at attention on his own earth-rug, as upright as a halbert, receiving his guests. His head was nearly bald, his hair having apparently been bitten with an emigrative tendency, and descended bodily upon his cheeks, from which it bristled out wirily, snow white. He wore his dingy and

soiled old uniform coat, the breast of which was a perfect thicket of medals, crosses, and clasps. Sir Dugald had often been pressed to invest in a cork leg, or some other of the modern improvements upon the uncompromising piece of timber—but he never would. He had a real attachment to the uncouth ironshod prop which did duty for his left leg, and it was reported that he had inserted a clause in his will, directing it to be kept sacredly by his wife in the event of his predecease, and buried finally in the coffin along with her. Lady Grant sat comfortably in an easy chair on the right hand of her lord—a genuine old soldier's wife, who having roughed it in days of yore, when she and her husband were following the drum, thoroughly appreciated an easy life now-a-days, and had waxed fat and jolly-looking under the influence of the contrast.

The first arrivals were the Laird of Macdonald and his son Hector. Old Macdonald was of the bluest blood of the Highlands, as proud as Lucifer, as fiery as the whisky of which he was so fond, a stern father, and a bad, severe, heartless landlord. He was very unpopular in the country, but owning as he did an immense tract of land (including part of the parish of Glenfiloch), he was too powerful a man not to be had in a measure of grudging respect. And sour, dour-tempered as he was, noted for the violence of his temper, and the terrible expression he sometimes gave to his passion, it must be said for Macdonald that he never was guilty of anything which directly compromised his position as a gentleman. Had this been the case, if he had been the chief of the Grants himself, he never would have "darkened" Sir Dugald's door, for the veteran never

feared the face of man, and was as thorough a gentleman as he was staunchly independent. But in the absence of any allegation of downright "black-sheepism," old Macdonald was tolerated, although heartily disliked, in every gentleman's house in the country. He seemed to know he was not a popular man, and indeed rather gloried in his unpopularity. Yet there were times when the "devil went out" of him, and left him a polished, courteous, agreeable man ; a frame of disposition which was wont to possess him on such an occasion as the present, and inevitably to abandon him as soon as ever he returned home to his son, his servants, and his dogs.

Between Hector Macdonald and his father the contrast was very striking. Hector was a tall, slenderly built, graceful young fellow, with a bright blue eye, a mass of curling

auburn hair, and a laugh like a marriage bell. He and his father were reported not to get on very well together, and many wondered why Hector did not embark in some career which would necessitate his leaving his parental home and being free from the reputed bickerings ; for the father was hardly a man likely to take much to heart the absence of his son—albeit his only one. But Hector lived on at home, alone with his father now that his tutor had left him, and he spent his days mostly out on the hills with his gun, when it was the shooting season, and when the moors were sealed to him, by the river side with his salmon rod. He had a name for a prime sportsman all over the country, and was everywhere popular as a modest, pleasant young fellow, with a good heart and a kind word for everybody.

CHAPTER IV.

“COME away, Mr. Macdonald,” shouted Sir Dugald, in a voice like the “word of command”—“come away an’ tell us how you are; an’ you, frien’ Hector, when are you gaun to be thinkin’ of askin’ your Queen for a commission, an’ leavin the roe-deer an’ the saumon for higher game?”

Hector blushed and laughed, and the kindly voice of Lady Grant interposed.

“Never min’ Sir Dugald, Hector lad; he would have every strappin’ lad marchin’ about the world wi’ a red coat on’s back, an’ leavin’ bits of him ahint, as Sir Dugald has dune, in some ditch on foreign grund. It’s

a weary, carkin' life, Hector, is soldierin'—bad eneuch to a single man, but a heap waur to a marriet ane. Do ye no min' times, Sir Dugald, when ye've tellt me yersel', when we were drinkin' muddy water an' eatin' weevilly biscuits, that ye wished yer time was up for your pension, an' you dune wi' glory an' taen up wi' comfort?"

"Hout fie, my leddy," bawled Sir Dugald; "you'll please to min' that when I said that I had been marriet a dizzen years, an' had twa or three bullets through antrant pairts o' my auld carcase. But naebody ever heard sic' a wish cross my lips while the bluid o' youth was het in my veins, an' when steps o' rank were to be won at the point o' the sword."

"Ah, Sir Dugald, ye maun min' ye joined the airmy when ye were but a beardless loon, an' had nae chance of havin' made ony

friends at hame that ye wad hae a very sair heart to leave. Noo, Hector lad, ye're auld eneuch to mak' a fool o' yersel', an' I have heard as mickle as that it was the bricht e'en o' Mary Home that keepit ye tethered amang us in the Hielans here."

Hector's face flushed scarlet, and an ugly scowl settled on the lowering brows of old Macdonald as he gazed inquisitively at his son's tell-tale face. At last the lad recovered himself in a measure, so as to trust himself to reply to Lady Grant—

"Well, my lady, your guessing has no basis now, for I really am going from home at last. My father has arranged within the last few days that I go as a boarder with Mr. Neville, the Episcopalian clergyman at Fetternoon, to finish my grind before passing for a commission."

"That's richt, laddie, that's richt," cried

Sir Dugald, "I kent there was fechtin' in that e'e o' yours. There's warm times comin', Hector, and plenty o' chance for ye to rise—that is, if ye dinna fall," added the veteran, with something which sounded like a cynical chuckle.

The frown had not cleared away from old Macdonald's brow when fresh arrivals were announced. These were Messrs. Fitzloom, senior and junior. The parent Fitzloom was a self-made man, who, from the position of a mechanic, had made his way up by talent, care, and luck, and was now at the head of one of the most lucrative manufacturing businesses in Lancashire, a large landowner to boot, and an M.P. He was a great friend of the spendthrift Lord Nairn, who, indeed, was said to have acted as his sponsor into high society for a substantial consideration. Some years ago, when a large estate in Sir

Dugald Grant's neighbourhood was in the market, the Manchester plutocrat stepped in and bought it, and had since resided on it during a considerable portion of every year. He was a big, placid, complaisant style of a man, the elder Fitzloom, and looked as if his energy had been pretty well pumped out of him in the upward fight with the world which he had so successfully waged. His son and heir was a young exquisite of the very first water externally, but with the heart of a "cad" below the lacquer of his exterior. His career at a public school had not been of the most reputable character, and he had got into an ugly scrape at the University, which had, indeed, been hushed up, but not before he had found it convenient to take his name off the books of his college. Since then he had been admitted as a partner into his father's business—but he had not dis-

tinguished himself greatly in the mercantile world.

The youthful hope of the Fitzlooms had an awkward *penchant* for low company ; when in Manchester he was a constant patron of the sporting public-houses of that city, where gentlemen of the pugilistic profession and betting men of the seedier order are fond of congregating. When, as was very often the case, he took a run up to London, his address was not even nominally at his father's house in Chesham Place. If there was a gate-money race-meeting within easy distance of the metropolis, young Fitzloom was sure to be there at his ease among the yelling listmen and rubicund publicans, and hail-fellow-well-met with the blacklegs who crop up on such occasions. He was not, however, utterly gone to the bad ; his name did not exactly stink in the nostrils of

gentlemen, although it had a taint of fishiness about it, and men, although they shrugged their shoulders when he was past, had not yet gone the length of giving him the cut direct. He was a special *protégé* of the *roué* Lord Nairn, and was in a fair way of reflecting the highest honour ultimately on that distinguished tutor of vice. When Fitzloom had done anything in his own neighbourhood which threatened to create an unpleasant *esclandre*, it was his custom to come down and rusticate quietly for a time at his father's place in Scotland, where, his true character not being matter of notoriety, he was admitted into the best society of the district. During one of these periods of sequestration, he had met Mary Home, and fallen in love with her perhaps as deeply, and honestly as a fellow of his nature well could. Although he had never yet formal-

ly declared himself, his attentions had been of a nature which admitted of no possibility of mistaking their meaning ; and they had been hateful to Mary in the exact ratio of their increasing effusiveness. Probably Fitzloom had not discrimination to see how distasteful he was to the lady ; at all events he refused to accept any hint, and persecuted Mary with a profusion of elaborate civilities on every occasion of their meeting.

We must apologise for having kept that young lady and her father waiting while we initiated the reader into the character of Fitzloom junior. They had arrived, and been heartily welcomed by Sir Dugald and Lady Grant, with both of whom Mary was an especial favourite. Macdonald senior glowered savagely at Mr. Home, with whom he had an old feud, which the clergyman, high-spirited with all his meekness, having

once attempted to solder up and failed, was fain to permit to remain open. Nor, after Lady Grant's rallying of his son, did he regard Mary with much greater favour. Fitzloom junior found his way to her side with alacrity, and staving off judiciously an attempted diversion which was made by the more bashful Hector, began in his own fascinating way to pay his devoirs to Mary. By-and-by the arrival of two or three more couples completed the party, and dinner was announced. Fitzloom senior, as the largest man in every sense of the word, took down the hostess; the others paired off according to taste, and Fitzloom junior, stalling off cleverly a somewhat clumsy rush made by our friend Hector, succeeded in securing that the tips of Mary's fair fingers rested on the sleeve of his coat during their progress down the tortuous staircase

which conducted into the dining-room.

The conversation was of the orthodox set-dinner-party-in-the-country order. The staunch old general recounted sundry war-like experiences in a stentorian voice for the benefit of the dowager on his left in particular, and all who thought proper to listen in general. Lady Grant detailed gastronomic experiences of her military life to the placid Fitzloom senior, chiefly having reference to the toughness of commissariat beef, and the unaccountable fondness manifested by Spanish cooks for the condiment of garlic ; all which interesting details that complaisant gentleman received with an appearance of quiet attention which, while it saved him the trouble of reply, quite entitled him, in the estimation of the worthy lady, to the appellation of an excellent listener, or rather, as she somewhat dubiously phrased it, a “most

conversable man." Between these two poles, the conversation up and down the table ran on the prospects of grouse, the *pros* and *cons* of moor-burning, the promise of a good summer and crop, whether the Highland Railway would ever be anything more than a name, when the Queen was coming north, whether free trade was really answering, and a dozen more stock topics of the like description. Fitzloom junior devoted all his energies to making himself agreeable to Mary Home, and flattered himself he was making strong running, as he himself would have termed it, because he succeeded in obtaining occasionally something more than the monosyllabic replies which formed Mary's usual response to the most brilliant of his sallies. Perhaps the fact that Hector was sitting exactly opposite, rudely disregarding, we fear, the wants and necessities of his own

partner, and glowering across the table at Fitzloom and Mary, might have had something to do with her unusual complaisance. It would be a libel to call Mary a coquette—but young ladies do not, as a rule, appreciate bashfulness in gentlemen, and it is just possible that she may have thought Hector had manifested a little too much of this characteristic, which was indeed rather a besetting sin of his, in allowing Fitzloom, through taking a dexterous advantage of the conventionalities, to monopolise her during the progress of the dinner. She could hardly have failed to see how *distract* was Hector as regarded the lady he himself had escorted downstairs, and how deeply engrossed he was in watching the progress of affairs across the table—and Mary must rest between the alternatives of an almost miraculous unconsciousness, or stand convicted of the least

little touch of *malice prepense* in the world.

When jolly Lady Grant had duly consumed her orthodox allowance of two bumpers of port, she gave the signal, and the ladies retired from the premises, leaving the gentlemen to their potations. Old Sir Dugald was by no means a sot, but not a man between Kincardine and Kintail liked his regulation allowance better. He did not care about wine, beyond a glass or two—he had had enough of it in Spain, he said, and it was apt to lie cold upon his stomach. The moment the ladies left the room Sir Dugald got up and rang the bell. The old butler, who had been his master's batman in days long gone by, did not trouble to answer the summons inquiringly—he knew well enough what was wanted—the kettle and the whisky bottle. Sir Dugald brewed his first tumbler, and most of his guests followed

his example. Old Macdonald indeed drank his whisky neat, and Mr. Fitzloom senior stuck to the port, and wished it had been claret; but the whisky was a tippie which met with special appreciation in the sight of his hopeful son, one of whose "points" was a fondness for "punishing" any drink that contained a reasonably strong admixture of the alcoholic principle. Hector mixed his tumbler like the rest, but neither he nor Mr. Home kept time as regarded replenishment. Sir Dugald rallied Hector on his temperance, which he affirmed was too strict, "for an honest twa tumblers never made a man a preen the waur;" and Fitzloom junior, who had been improving the time to some purpose, as his glazed eyes and flushed face bore testimony, muttered something in which "milksop" was the only audible word. But Hector avouched his adherence to the "single

tumbler" rule, so the good knight wished him joy of his discretion, hoped he would have as much self-control on the first night he joined a regimental mess, and contentedly compounded Caulker No. 3 for himself.

Now, Mr. Fitzloom jun. was not devoid either of a certain amount of penetration, or of a modicum of low cunning. He had heard rumours that Hector Macdonald was an admirer of Mary Home, and he had seen enough in the course of the evening to convince him that young Macdonald did not want inclination, at all events, to become a dangerous rival to him in the enterprise on which he had set his heart. The Manchester man of the world had a consummate contempt, which he hardly cared to disguise, for "a fellow who had never been twenty miles from his father's doorstep," who wouldn't bet, and never drank more than one tumbler of

toddy; but to-night he was seized with a preternatural fit of whisky-begotten astuteness, the brilliancy of which astonished himself. He determined to "squash the bumpkin" once and for good. Accordingly he rose from his place opposite Hector, and, glass in hand, circumnavigated the table, and sat down by the side of that silent and *distrail* youth. Very cunningly, in his own estimation, did he lead off the conversation.

"Mr. Macdonald, how is it we never see you across at Tarradale? I'm sure my father and myself would be delighted if you would come over the hill and look us up as often as you please."

Hector returned from the region of reverie just in time to catch the sense of Fitzloom's conciliatory remark. He had an abiding disgust for the man, apart altogether from

the question of rivalry, and he coldly answered—

“I seldom visit anywhere except among our more intimate friends, and do not care to enlarge the circle of my acquaintance-ship.”

This was certainly the reverse of encouraging ; but Fitzloom had a purpose to serve, and on occasions could put his sense of his own consequence in his pocket. He mentally d——d the insolence of “the Highland snob,” but with imperturbable suavity attacked Hector again.

“There’s certainly infernally little life at Tarradale, and indeed for the matter of that the whole of the country hereabout is as dull as ditch-water ; but if you could prevail on the old party to slacken the bearing-rein for a month, and let you out on the loose with me for a run up to London, I’d show you a

thing or two which would make your rustic peepers stare. I know you'd enjoy a spell of real London life—not the hum-drum, white-choker style of thing that young prigs who would fain be thought 'rising men,' go in for, but a jolly, free-and-easy, racketty life—claret-cup and champagne at night, and brandy and seltzer in the morning.”

“I fear, Mr. Fitzloom, my education has been so much neglected as to prevent me appreciating the full beatitude of the style of life you appear to take so much delight in. I can't say you tempt me.”

“Confound it, man,” persisted Fitzloom, warming with the occasion, “you don't know what you are talking of. How the deuce can you appreciate what you are as ignorant of as a hippopotamus? I'll take my oath that, after one glorious night with me, you would be as eager for another as ever you

were after a royal stag? I want to convince you, because my own time's drawing to a close, and if you don't jump now, you'll miss the chance. I'm going up to London next week for one last fling, and then say good-bye to the old game for ever. You see I'm going to make a fool of myself."

"Indeed," drily remarked Hector, with a slight tone of incredulity in his voice. Perhaps he thought the feat an impossible one.

"Yes, by gad," continued Fitzloom. "It's a thundering idiotic thing for a fellow like me to do ; but hanged if I can help it for the life of me. I'm going to get married, by Jove !"

Another "indeed " was all that this important announcement .extracted from Hector.

"Fact," continued Fitzloom ; "stern fact,

and no mistake about it." Then sinking his voice so as to be audible to Hector alone, he observed, with affected nonchalance, " Day-vilish fine girl, Mary Home, don't you think?"

Hector was not yet twenty-one, and, the truth may as well out, over head and ears in love. Neither of these circumstances, it must be allowed, conduced to enable him to hear so significant a remark with equanimity. His heart gave a tumultuous bound, the hot blood rushed into his face, and the muscles rose upon his arms as his fists clenched instinctively. " A lump in the throat," which, do what he would, he couldn't swallow on the instant, not only stopped his utterance, but seemed to impede his breathing for the time, and when his first impulse was conquered to knock Fitzloom down, he had a hard struggle to keep himself from rising

and rushing out of the room. Apparently engrossed in the compounding of a fresh tumbler of whisky and water, Fitzloom, glancing askance, narrowly watched the effect of the bolt he had sped, and refrained to risk spoiling its full effect by any interposition. At length his mixing operation was concluded, and he turned half round to Hector again and waited for his response.

Hector's pride came to his aid. He despised himself for exposing to his adversary such a gaping chink in his armour, and assuming, not with the most brilliant success, an affectation of the extremest nonchalance, he muttered something about "never having seen occasion to come to any conclusion on the subject."

Fitzloom was sufficiently wide awake as to the point he had made.

"Nonsense, Macdonald ; you've got a pair

of eyes in your head, and can tell a fine woman when you see one as well as any one else. For my part I don't mind owning to it. I was smitten, regularly struck comical, the very first time I saw her. Of course I don't mean to say, if I could have seen my way to settling the matter the other way, you know, that I wouldn't have jumped at it; but the old fellow is as proud as a hidalgo, and there's plenty of the devil in the girl herself. Besides, the governor is horribly down on that sort of thing, and it would make an ugly clamour in the neighbourhood, where of course we want to stand as well as possible. No, that cock wouldn't fight nohow; so I've made up my mind to throw myself away. It's the devil and all of a sacrifice for a young fellow like me, who might marry into a family of title any day of the week, to take to a seedy old

parson's daughter—but dashed if I don't think the girl has bewitched me, with those great black eyes of hers. What say you—don't you think I am a thundering fool?"

While these interesting confidences were being thus freely poured into Hector's ear, that young gentleman felt he would cheerfully exchange his comfortable chair for a position on the rack. Mr. Fitzloom never knew how perilously near he had been at this crisis of his confessions to a thrashing which would have spoiled his wooing for some weeks to come. The tension of the self-restraint which Hector exercised brought the large beads of perspiration out upon his forehead, and he had to keep his hands out of sight to conceal the nervous twitchings of his fingers; but he succeeded in maintaining the mastery over himself. His salvation was in silence. He felt it would be

a terrible hazard to trust himself to speak.

Fitzloom repeated his question. "Don't you think I am a thundering fool?" Even in his dire distress a gleam of humour flashed across Hector's mind; he felt he could reply with a safe conscience, "I do, indeed;" and he replied accordingly with some unction.

"So do I," continued his tormentor; "but if there ever is an excuse for a man acting idiotically, it is when a woman is in the question. After all, she is a girl to be proud of anywhere, and, egad, she might have been born a countess, as regards her style. I haven't taken the grand plunge just yet, but I know I'm all right whenever I like to do so. You saw what encouragement I received at dinner time, didn't you? So now, Macdonald, that I have thus made you my *confidant*, as a proof of friendship, you'll come up to London with me, won't

you, and be my companion in the sowing of my last crop of wild oats? The good time is just beginning up at head-quarters. Is it a fixture?"

"Why, no," replied Hector. "I really don't care about the sort of thing which seems to kindle so much enthusiasm in you; besides, I leave home next week, to read for my commission; and as I am backward, and the examination comes on so soon, I couldn't spare the time were I ever so eager."

Fitzloom had accomplished the purpose he had set himself—with no small address, he thought complacently. The warmth of his pressure that Hector should accompany him to London was mere affectation, and there was no object for keeping up the farce any longer. "Very well, my dear fellow," he replied, "all I can say is, you are re-

fusing a good offer. You won't find many so well up to London life as this child, I can tell you. Don't blame me if you get in a hole, when you do go up, for want of the experience I could have given you. What a shocking muff you are with what Sir Dugald calls the elements! you are as bad as the parson himself. I'll go and drink my next tumbler with old Ferintosh; ta, ta." And away Fitzloom went higher up the table, leaving Hector in a very unenviable frame of mind.

CHAPTER V.

AFTER Fitzloom had thus jauntily terminated his conversation with Hector, the latter sat for some time silent and brooding amidst the noisy talk of the rest of the company. He was engaged in a mental effort to argue himself into the conviction that Fitzloom was a braggart and a liar, but he found the task by no means an easy one. A certain *vrai-semblance* pervaded the details he had just listened to, and they received unpleasantly strong confirmation in Mary's unwontedly gracious treatment of Fitzloom during dinner, of which Hector had been a surprised and mortified witness. There had been

times, the young fellow bitterly remembered, that he had imagined, and was happy beyond measure in the imagination, that his old playmate had manifested toward him something of a warmer feeling than the mere friendly cordiality which was the fruit of their childish intimacy; and he would almost succeed in convincing himself that it was utterly impossible that a girl of Mary Home's refinement and delicacy of sentiment could tolerate for a moment the addresses of such a fellow as Fitzloom. But then, on the other hand, he had the testimony of his own eyes to the fact that at any rate she did not repulse these attentions; and it did not help to soothe him, when he reflected that lately Mary had manifested a strange disinclination to treat himself in the old familiar, almost sisterly way. Now, Hector was a bashful young fellow, as we have seen, but this shy-

ness arose in a great measure from his ignorance of the world ; and he was by no means deficient in decision of character. His effort to reason out the position in any way which gave himself a shred of comfort having miserably failed, he came to the resolution that he would know his fate from Mary's own lips that very night, if possible.

Having taken this doughty resolve, he rose and stole softly from the dining-room, unobserved by Fitzloom, who, by this time, was engaged in yet another tumbler, and was deep in a discussion with Sir Dugald on the respective merits of English and Irish horses. On entering the drawing-room, he found Lady Grant and her female guests in high conclave over the bohea—but no Mary was visible. Good-natured Lady Grant saw the lad's anxious gaze round the room, and she beckoned him to her side.

“Hector, lad,” said the good old veteraness in a whisper, “I ken wha ye are lookin’ for”—Hector’s blush owned to the impeachment which his lips did not contradict—“Mary has gane down to the clachan to see an auld servant o’ her father’s that’s lying there very ill wi’ a consumption. If I were you, Hector, I wad jist gang down an’ convoy her back again. Ye’ll do nae good wi’ a lassie, man, if ye are sae blate and bashfu’. I noticed that Fitzloom at denner—how fain he was tryin’ to mak’ up to Mary—an’ if I’m no sair mista’en in your face, ye noticed it yoursel’. But the whippersnapper’s nae mate for sic’ as her, an’ I wud maistly as sune see the mitherless lassie in her coffin as wed to him, for he is coorse at heart. I dinna mind hoo rough a man’s outside is—Sir Dugald is no just a Lord Chesterfield—but a man wi’ a foul, false heart wud kill

Mary in twa year. Sae gang yer ways, Hector, laddie, an' see if ye can ding that Fitzloom out o' Mary's head—and when ye're about it, just spier if she wad mind giein' you her heart. If I'm no far wrang, there's a guid bit o't yours already."

Hector thanked the kind old lady with his eyes only, for his heart was full, and started on his momentous expedition. The moon had just risen, and was shimmering over the tops of the bare hills down into the little wooden dell in which lay the clachan. The sweet stillness of the early night was unbroken save by the occasional hoot of the owl from the dense forest on the other side of the valley, and the sharp bark of a sheep-dog far up on the hill-side. A shower of rain had fallen in the course of the evening, and the air was fragrant with the fresh perfume of the wetted sward, and

the faint sweet scent of the young birch leaves. All nature was soothed in a drowsy peacefulness, and Hector felt the placid influence exercising a sedative effect upon his own agitated and strained nerves. He became calm, and calmness grew into a pleasant hopefulness, as he, first saunteringly, then at a brisker pace, walked down the footpath which led to the clachan. He had just reached the top of the steep brae which overhung the hamlet, and was pondering whether to descend or wait patiently at the top, when a moonbeam struck full on Mary's white dress and dark shawl as she came lightly up the steep ascent. Hector's pulses gave an ominous bound, and he had to overcome a strong impulse to turn tail and bolt; but he stood his ground manfully, and ere Mary reached the top he had quite regained his composure.

“What, Mr. Macdonald !” exclaimed she. “What brings you away from Sir Dugald’s table ? Are you fond of watching a moon-rise, or are you on the more prosaic hunt for poachers ?”

“No, Mary,” replied Hector. “I’m neither a poet nor a gamekeeper. Lady Grant told me you had gone down to the clachan, and I hoped you would not take it ill if I came to meet you.”

“Quite the reverse, Mr. Macdonald. Do you still care about botany ?”

“Why is it, Mary, that you call me Mr. Macdonald now-a-days, instead of Hector, as you used to do ? You remind me about our old botanizing days, and that shows you have not forgotten the happy days when we used to go specimen-hunting together. Then, Mary, you called me Hector, and not that icicle-like name, ‘Mr. Macdonald.’”

“Oh, I’m sure I don’t know,” replied Mary lightly. “Times have changed since then, and we are no longer boy and girl, you know, Mr. Macdonald. People would think it strange now to hear us, who are no relatives, calling each other by our Christian names.”

“Which is as much as to say, Miss Home, that you prohibit me from calling you by your Christian name. You see I take the hint obediently enough.”

“A sign,” continued Mary in the same bantering tone, “that you are properly compliant to a lady’s wishes.”

Hector had played his first trump and lost the trick. He had hoped to break the ice by this allusion to the old familiar baptismal names—instead of which, he found himself a good deal further off his purpose than when the conversation began. He took his determination.

Halting and facing Mary, who stopped involuntarily as well—"Mary," said he, "you just now said times had changed since those pleasant old botanising days. Now I want to ask you, straightforward, have you changed too?"

"Of course I have—how can you ask so absurd a question? Haven't I grown taller, and cleverer, and older, and wiser? Why, you know you've changed yourself in a hundred things!"

"But not in one thing, Mary. I loved you then with a boyish love—but with my whole heart. I am a man now, Mary, and love you a thousand times deeper now."

He had been watching with pain, as the moonlight played on her face, how the tantalising expression of *badinage* was lurking provokingly about the corners of her mouth, and had wondered whether she really saw

his drift, and thought it fit subject for her playful mockery. But as he uttered these last words, her face altered as if by magic, and, as she averted it hurriedly, he fancied he saw a tear glisten on the long eyelash. She made no reply, and the pair stood mute for more than a minute, he gazing at her with excited intensity, she turned half sideways from him and looking into vacancy.

At length Hector broke the silence. "Mary, you have heard me, and I demand an answer. For years, ever since I can remember, I have thought but of you by day, and dreamt but of you by night. I thought I was sure of you, Mary, until lately—I thought I knew your heart. But now, as you say, you have grown older and wiser—and lately I have been torn with doubt. I mean to doubt no longer, I will know to-night the best or the worst. I ask you

again—Mary, do you love me?” She was silent still, and it seemed from the heaving of her bosom that she was deeply agitated.

Hector spoke on hurriedly. “I might have doubted before to-night whether I had your love or not, Mary—but I could never have thought it credible that you would encourage such a man as Fitzloom. I have a right by virtue of our old friendship to warn you against that man, for he is worthy of no pure woman’s love. But pray God the warning is unneeded. Let me have my answer, Mary—speak to me, and tell me that my house has not been built upon the sand.”

“Hector, leave me; I must not love you.”

“Must not—where is the reason for the ‘must not?’—if your heart prompts you to

love me, what or who on God's earth shall come between us?"

"Many things, Mr. Macdonald," answered Mary, who had in some measure regained her composure, "many things. I know your father, what a stern, harsh man he is; how he would spurn you from his door were you to carry me to it as your bride. You know the old rankling hate he keeps green against my father, and be sure the daughter shares it. Mr. Macdonald, I too have pride! No father shall curse his son, even if it were causelessly, through me. Besides, there is even a stronger argument for me at least than this. My father has only me to lean on in his old age, and never will I leave him. No, Mr. Macdonald, you must not think of this any more. It is mad and foolish."

"This is no answer, Mary, and I refuse

to take it for one. Is my father entitled wantonly to stand between me and the only joy of my life? I will leave him, Mary; he has never been a father to me, and he will never miss me."

"You know not what you say, Hector. Think you, womanly pride, if nothing else were in the way, would permit me to give people the opportunity to say I was determined to wed a Macdonald even in his father's teeth? No, Hector, you have your duty to perform to your parent, I mine to mine. I will not wed above my station. I must not think of wedding at all while my dear father lives, which I hope he may do for many a year. Think no more of this matter, dear Hector, and let us be to each other as we have been—almost brother and sister."

"Brother and sister," broke in Hector al-

most fiercely. "Do you take a man for an idiot or an icicle, to make such a proposition? I tell you, Mary, if you are not to be mine in some other relation than brotherhood and sisterhood, I must tear myself from what has hitherto been my chief happiness—meeting you. Will you make a man reckless and hopeless, Mary, for this world? In you is all my hope—all that makes life pleasant to me centres in you. Give me some little chance to hold on to, Mary!"

"Don't talk so sinfully, Hector. I cannot do what you wish. We may—but no; give up the thought of me, Hector, for ever. I shall never marry. I promise you that. My father will live many years; I hope till I am an old maid—and by that time, Mr. Macdonald, you will laugh at your vehemence of to-night. Let us drop the subject and walk on. It is getting late."

The two walked silently side by side till they reached Sir Dugald's porch. Then Hector turned to Mary, and laid his hand heavily on her shoulder. She shrunk from him, for there was a strange flush on his cheek, and a dangerous sparkle in his eyes. But the sounds of his voice reassured her. He said, hoarsely,

“Give me a kiss, Mary, for auld lang syne,” and without waiting for her to signify assent or the contrary, he lifted up her slight form in his strong arms, pressed his lips to hers, strained her once to his breast, put her tenderly down, and rushed away across the moor at headlong speed.

CHAPTER VI.

POOR Hector, as he strode homeward through the moonlight, was a prey to the bitterest emotions. He never had known how engrossing had been his love for Mary, till he had heard the words which killed hope in his heart. For long he remained sunk in the depths of despair—for the longer he pondered over the manner in which Mary had answered him, the more fully, knowing her characteristics as he did, he realized that his dismissal was final. Sleep seemed to have fled his eyelids. Up and down his bed-room he strode restlessly, all through the still watches of the night,

till the moonlight paled, and the stars died out in the sky before the increasing brilliance of the rosy morning. Somehow, daybreak brought with it a glimmer of hopefulness into the tossed mind of the wretched lad. He argued himself into something approaching a belief—faint indeed, but amazingly consoling—that, after all, Mary did love him. He bethought himself of her agitation—he remembered the tears he had observed glistening on the long eyelashes—and as he called up before him every phrase she had used, he fancied he could discern something which told him that hope was not altogether gone from him. Mary's pride, and his own position as his father's son, were, he brought himself to believe, the chief obstacles between him and his happiness—and, poor sanguine youth, he thought he saw a way to break down these impedi-

ments. His brain, he felt, was in too great a confusion to enable him to think out and elaborate his little programme, and he resolved to take a long solitary saunter over the mountains and perfect the scheme of his tactics, after the sedative of a few hours' sleep. Throwing himself on his bed, he was soon wrapt in a profound slumber, out of which he did not awake till his father's old housekeeper knocked at his door, inquiring: "whether he meant to sleep a' day."

When he came downstairs into the breakfast-room, he was glad to find that his father had not yet made his appearance. In truth, old Macdonald had been considerably perturbed in his sombre spirit at one or two incidents which had happened during the course of the evening at Sir Dugald's, and, as his manner was when out of sorts, he had

on his return home betaken himself with much assiduity to the whisky-bottle. Having sat up drinking moodily half the night, he was scarcely in a position to realise the sweets of early rising in the morning, and Hector accordingly, to his great satisfaction, had the breakfast-room to himself. Ordinarily a young gentleman gifted with a highly respectable Highland appetite, on this particular morning he was as destitute of that splendid blessing as the most jaded London *roué* after “a night” the finish of which had been about five in the morning; and after merely swallowing a cup of coffee for form’s sake, he started on the long-cogitating saunter which he had promised himself. There is this marked difference between the man who is a dweller in towns and him whose life has been spent in the free, open country. The former, when he wishes to put on his

considering-cap, seeks the retirement of his closet, perhaps from the idea that he thinks more intensely, because of the concentration of his thoughts, within the four walls of a room; the latter makes for the open, and communes with himself amidst Nature's solitudes. The more freely the breezes of heaven circulate around him, the better he likes it, the concentration theory having no weight in his estimation.

Hector, having once reached the heather, cared little in what direction his steps carried him, walking along the breezy uplands, with his thoughts all turned inwardly. The more he pondered, the brighter grew the prospects of the scheme which had so opportunely flashed across him at daybreak, and with the impulsiveness of youth he was already building castles in the air on the strength of its success. But Hector, although sanguine to

the verge of rashness, was not wholly a "plunger." Although probably if he had enjoyed the services of a Mentor, who might have suggested to him the advisability of "hedging," he would not have understood the meaning of the word, and, when it had been explained to him, would have rejected the tendered advice as utterly impracticable in the circumstances of his own particular dilemma, he still could bring himself to look on the contingency of failure as far from an impossible one; and in the event of failure, although he shuddered and caught his breath as he thought of it, he manfully compelled himself to chalk out a line of conduct—a line, no doubt, crazy and Quixotic as the world goes (as, indeed, for that matter was the scheme the success of which he so ardently hoped for), but one in a high-spirited, impulsive youth, smarting under a disappointment so

intense, by no means devoid of precedent or parallel.

Deep in these thoughts, he had strolled heedlessly in the direction of the residence of Mr. Fitzloom. A spur of his father's property ran into that gentleman's estate, to within a mile or two of the mansion-house, and at the end of this strip were a couple of cotters' houses. The dwellers in these lived by tilling the small pieces of alluvial land in the little valleys by the margin of several small streams, which, coming down in different directions from the hills, united just below the hovels, and formed the head waters of a considerable tributary to the Spey. One of these little valleys was almost isolated from the larger glen by a great rock, through which the mountain burn had cut its way. This impediment had formerly formed a lake, and when the

stream had overcome the obstacle, and the water had run off, the bed of this ancient lake had been left dry, and comparatively fertile, and it was now cultivated in a primitive fashion by the humble inhabitants of the cottage near the opening of the little glen. Hector had passed the cottages, and was sauntering up the main glen immersed in deep thought. He was just opposite the narrow opening of the smaller one, when his reverie was rudely broken by loud cries in a female voice issuing from its interior. Astonished at the sounds, so unwonted in a locality where quietude usually reigned supreme, he roused himself and rushed up the bed of the little stream past the shoulder of the mighty rock. When he came in view of the little field beyond, a sight met his eyes which brought the hot blood into his face with a passionate glow. A pretty,

modest girl, the daughter of one of his father's humble tenants of the cottages, was clasped in the rude grasp of Mr. Fitzloom, jun., who was making strenuous efforts to snatch kisses from the frightened girl, undeterred by her struggles and shrieks. As Hector, running at the top of his speed, came in sight, the girl broke frantically from Fitzloom's grasp, and ran excitedly towards him, crying piteously, and exclaiming, "Oh! thank God, Mr. Hector, thank God, you are come!" Fitzloom stood his ground, but glanced around him uneasily, as if he would fain have made a bolt if he could; but Hector was between him and the only exit, so he accepted the position, and determined to brazen it out.

"Good morning, Mr. Macdonald," he said with an affectation of nonchalance; "you have turned up at a devilish unlucky mo-

ment, spoiling my sport in this unhandsome manner."

The flush deepened on Hector's cheek, and his fist clenched involuntarily, but he calmed himself to reply, "For my part, I think I came just in the nick of time. If this be a sample of the 'London life' you talked of last night, I give you warning that it won't bear transplanting into this quiet neighbourhood."

Fitzloom began to think Hector was a "muff," and thought he might try a little bounce.

"I say, young fellow, why don't you study for the Church? With your priggish ways, you would make a stunning parson; why, you're half one already. But look here, the best thing you can do is to walk quietly back the way you came, and leave me and my young potato-planter here to

settle our own little business in our own way. You're out of place. Do you take the hint?"

Hector bit his lip till the blood nearly came, in the effort to keep down his rising passion—but he succeeded.

"Mr. Fitzloom," said he, "if you are so utterly shameless and degraded as to stand there and unblushingly avow that you are a blackguard, I am sorry for it. My place is to see this girl safe out of the possibility of harm from you, and if you take my advice, you will get out of the neighbourhood as quickly as suits your convenience, for her father is the sort of man when angry that it won't be good for you to meet."

The girl had remained a witness to the interview hitherto, for she knew Hector's spirit, and she was anxious to prevent him from quarrelling with Fitzloom on her

account. She had remained close to Hector, and a little behind him while the above dialogue had been going on, and now she struck in—

“Oh! Maister Hector, I’ll no tell my father onything aboot it; for he wad be neither to haud nor to bind till he had it oot wi’ that man. Let him gang aboot his gait, and ye gang yours, and hae nae mair words aboot the matter. It’s a’ ow’r noo, and nae guid can come o’ quarrelling aboot it.”

“Your father be d——d, and you too,” cried Fitzloom, excitedly; “I reckon you and this young Highland cock-sparrow have had many a quiet hour up the glen together. You don’t like the idea of me poaching on your preserves—eh, Macdonald? You’re a nice, virtuous young fellow, to be sure.”

This was the straw that broke the camel’s

back. Drawing a long breath, and shaking off the girl's hand placed pleadingly on his shoulder, he raised his clenched fist, sent it straight out from the shoulder, like a catapult, and caught Mr. Fitzloom full and fair upon his sneering mouth. That astonished gentleman went "to grass" like a bullock, and lay there motionless for a minute or so; then he began to wriggle about, as if satisfying himself that he was not undergoing a horsewhipping as he lay, and finally rose slowly to his feet, sputtering vehemently, and expectorating a tooth or two as he regained his feet.

The young peasant shrieked as she saw the blood on Fitzloom's face, and she threw herself between the two men as if to interpose for the prevention of the further hostilities which she thought imminent; but Mr. Fitzloom did not want anything more in

that particular line just at present. He had found his mistake out as regarded Hector's temperament, and had no wish to brave another blow from that sledge-hammer fist. Still, he did not like to sneak from the field quite like a beaten cur.

After an interval spent in investigating the amount of injury his dental organization had received, he sullenly faced Hector, and muttered,

"By God, Macdonald, you'll give me satisfaction for this. I'll have you out, by Jove I will!"

Hector was calm enough again by this time, and replied with all the equanimity in the world,

"With all my heart, Mr. Fitzloom. I shall be glad to hear from you any time you choose, up to nine o'clock to-morrow morning; beyond that hour I cannot bind myself,

but till that time I am quite at your service.
I wish you good morning."

So saying, he turned from the discomfited libertine, and having escorted the terrified rustic beauty to her father's door, and extracted from her a promise of silence as to what had passed, he turned his face homeward, intent upon immediate action.

CHAPTER VII.

“**H**ASTE yè, Maister Hector, haste ye!”
was the hurried exclamation of the old housekeeper, as Hector entered the hall of his father’s house. “The maister has been bawlin’ for ye ever sin’ he began to stir in the mornin’, and has gi’en orders that ye are to gang up to his room the moment ye come in. Fat’s pitten him out, Maister Hector, I dinna ken, but he is in a fearsome temper. He has been at the whisky bottle already, an’ swore at me whan I tell’t him ye had gane out, most dreadful. I’m thinkin’ ye’ve been doin’ something to anger him.”

The old woman had been Hector’s mo-

ther's maid, and had remained in the house when her mistress died, out of pure affection for the motherless boy. She looked upon him and loved him almost as a son, and what would have been a liberty in another, was but kindly solicitude in her.

Hector smiled, and told old Elspeth not to distress herself about the state of his father's mind, although the news she gave him did not tend to his inward exhilaration. But he had "screwed his courage to the sticking-point," and sturdily refused to be daunted by any evil prognostics. He threw down his cap, and walked up stairs to the den of the old Macdonald, where that worthy was wont to drink his whisky, bully his factor, and swear at his son upon occasions. Hector hated the sight of the place, for it had been the scene of many a wantonly cruel flogging in his boyish days, and the

last recollection he had of his long dead mother was seeing her come out of the cruel chamber with the tears streaming down her face, and hearing the oaths of the brutal husband, as he hounded her from his presence. In reply to his knock, a surly voice bade him "come in," and he entered. His father sat in his leathern easy-chair, with the whisky bottle on the table by his side; his face was swollen and flushed, and his eyes heavy and bloodshot—indications of what his morning's employment had been. Hector bent his head respectfully, and took his stand at the other side of the table.

"Where the devil have you been all the morning?" was the amiable opening of the conversation on the part of the senior.

"On the hills, father. The morning has been a beautiful one, and I knew of nothing to keep me within doors."

A soft answer is said, on high authority, to turn away wrath, but this was certainly not its effect on Mr. Macdonald.

“Look here, young fellow; you knew well I should want you this morning, and you went sneaking out on the moors, to get out of what to you would be an unpleasant interview. But you only postponed it, for all your confounded cunning.”

“How should I know you would want me this morning, father? Six mornings out of the seven I am free to go where I like for anything you care, and I can conjecture nothing on account of which you should specially want me this morning.”

“Don’t tell lies. You know infernally well what I want you for. What did that old cat, Lady Grant, mean yesterday by alluding to Mary Home as the attraction which was keeping you at home?”

“Why not ask Lady Grant, father?”

“Because I am asking you, and, by Jove, I will have an answer! That great calf-face of yours flushed scarlet when the old woman rallied you about the girl’s eyes, and you sat watching her all dinner-time yesterday as if you could swallow her.”

Hector saw that the time for temporizing was past, and he disdained to quibble even with his angry, unreasoning old father on such a subject.

“What is it you want to know from me, then, father?” he said quietly.

“Confound you! I want to know whether you have been maniac enough to go casting sheep’s eyes at that girl Home—that’s what I want to know.”

“Father, I love Mary Home.”

The passion of the old man at this plain avowal was fearful. He entirely lost the

government of himself. Pouring out a torrent of imprecations, he grasped the whisky-bottle as if to fling it at Hector's head, but, struck by a second thought, poured out a tumbler-full of naked spirit, and drank the fiery draught without drawing breath. This only added fuel to the flame, and for many minutes he so raved and swore, that Hector dreaded he would work himself into a fit. At length the vehemence of his fury spent itself, and he gained coherence enough to demand "what the d—— he meant by standing there looking his father unblushingly in the face after such a confession?"

"Because I see nothing to blush for. Mary Home is fit to be a prince's bride."

"D——nation! Let her be so, then, but she shall never be yours, if I know it."

Hector thought of his last night's repulse, but replied calmly,

“Father, I want to talk quietly with you, if you will calm yourself, and listen to me. I have got a proposal to make to you.”

The old man's mood changed. “Any proposal you like, Hector, my boy,” he cried eagerly. “I'll do anything for you ever you like—give you anything money will buy—if you'll only give up the mad project of wedding the daughter of that infernal smooth-faced old parson. I hate the man as I hate poison, and I've done so ever since we were lads at college. I could kill him this minute if he was before me—I could, with positive pleasure. Hector, I'll curse you if ever you think of bringing that man's brat into the old home of the Macdonalds. But no ; you shall never do that while the breath is in my body. I'll bundle you out neck and crop to-night, unless you swear to me that you will give up this

idiotic notion that has got into your head."

"I can't do that, father, and I won't. But I don't want to bring Mary Home inside your door. She is too proud, I know, to enter a house to the head of which she is unwelcome. I wish you would hear temperately, father, what I have to say—perhaps you would not be so furious at my proposal——"

"Furious! By God! you are driving me mad. 'You can't and you won't,' eh? Nice language for a jackanapes like you to use to me! I say you shall and you must—and let us see whose will is the stronger. You know me, Hector."

"I do, I fear, father, only too well. But I only ask one chance to speak, and I ask of you to listen to me without losing command of yourself, and give a favourable ear to what I have to say."

“ Say on, then,” sulkily responded Macdonald.

“ What I want to say, father, is just this. I love Mary Home, and I would submit to be torn apart by wild horses before I would resign that love—bootless as it may be. But I do not wish to coerce you in any way—far from it. You are the Laird of Macdonald, and you have a right to a voice in the matter of a bride for your son and heir—that I do not deny. But, father, you and I are at hopeless variance on this point, and I know you too well to imagine for a moment that you will ever yield. What I propose is this. My mother brought you some money which is settled upon me, and of which you are the discretionary trustee. Now I want you to give me that money. I will take it—I will leave Macdonald—I will change my name, once and for ever, and

never again will I trouble you in any form. You know, father, you do not care for me save as the heir who will perpetuate the race of the Macdonalds—you have often told me that you had not a spark of parental feeling—and I believe it. Now it will not be much of a wrench for you to transfer this sort of regard to my Cousin Donald, who is the next heir. Give me my mother's money, and let me go—consider Donald your heir from to-day, and I promise to you that nobody will ever know that I have any claims upon you or on the property. I will formally abjure them in any way you may desire. And then look upon me as one dead—blot me out from the book of your remembrance altogether. Do, my father, give ear to this fervent request of mine; it is from the heart. I have done.”

And so this was poor, foolish Hector's

grand scheme, which he had elaborated with so much carefulness in the course of his morning's walk. Yes; the lad, proceeding on the shadowy groundwork that after all Mary did care for him, and that it was only the circumstances of his position that had caused his rejection, had devised this notable scheme. He meant, if his father granted his earnest request, to take this money of his mother's, leave Scotland altogether, change his name, and take a farm in England, or embark in some other pursuit in which he might entirely avoid contact with anybody who had known him in his former sphere. Then he fancied he might—nay, he had almost argued himself into a confidence that he would—obtain Mary's consent to share his quiet life. As for the obstacle which Mary's duty to her father presented, that melted like snow before the young

man's ardour. What could be easier than to induce the old man to abandon a spot to which he had no living ties, and come and live with his daughter and her husband in their English home? Why, Hector had been already planning the new cabinets of botanical specimens with which he would delight Mary when he should bring her home to her new residence!

"I have done," he said, and stood waiting for his father's fiat.

The veins swelled on the old man's forehead, and his breathing was short and thick, during the silence of some minutes which followed Hector's conclusion. And then he broke out furiously,

"Do you take me for a madman, young fellow? Do you think I am going to pension you off in your act of deliberate disobedience? No, by George! If a penny,

or the twentieth part of a penny, would save you and her from starvation and set you up for life, you should not have it from me. Not a cent; not a plack; not a brass farthing," he roared vehemently, filling himself another bumper. "I tell you, you may rot in a ditch before I would even give you Christian burial, if you marry Mary Home. I daresay," he continued, emptying the tumbler again, "you would like to take this money, you mean-spirited hound, and go and bury yourself somewhere out of sight! You can't be a Macdonald, you craven wretch! Your mother must have been——"

"Hold, father; not another word like that, else I will forget that you are my father. You refuse my request, then?"

"Ay, ten thousand times, ay! If it were the last words I had to utter on my death-

bed, I would curse you if you marry Mary Home! Your request, indeed—a proper request, truly! Why don't you ask me to go out of sight, or cut my throat, or something, so that you might be the Macdonald yourself, and have the disposal or the throwing away of yourself at your own discretion!"

"Then, father," said Hector, "I have no more to say," and he turned to go.

"Here, boy," cried Macdonald, "I give you till to-morrow night; and by the living God, if you do not then promise me to abjure Mary Home for ever, I turn you out of my house. Mark me well, I mean what I say."

Hector left the room silently. He went upstairs to his own room, where he remained secluded till past nine next morning. No message came to him from Fitzloom within

the specified time, and when he had given him half-an-hour's "law" in case of any accident, Hector walked downstairs, shook hands with the old housekeeper (who could not fathom the unwonted demonstration), said good-bye to his dog, and shook the dust of his father's house from off his feet.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE second day after Hector left his father's house was a great occasion in Engil. Engil was the county town, and fancied itself quite a metropolis. A little old-fashioned place it was, once a great stronghold of the monks, who had left their marks upon it in the shape of architectural remains. Now-a-days the monks had been replaced by lawyers, who swarmed within the little town, and with the bank agents monopolised the chief seats at the feasts, and most of the other good things going. A quiet, retired, "genteel" little place, not disturbed by the clangour of machinery, and the hum

of a busy emporium of commerce, Engil was always much affected as a place of residence by pensioned-off Indian officials, and men who, having realised a competency abroad, selected it as a pleasant spot wherein to spend the evening of their days, a spot wherein a very modest income afforded the full fruition of the *otium cum dignitate*—the latter a desideratum in high request with such people.

Engil was far from being a dull town ; a constant competition went on between the legal aristocracy of the place and the retired Indians and Australians, the rivalry taking the form of dinner and evening parties, so that whoever was lucky enough to occupy a neutral ground between the two great factions, and thus shared in the hospitality of both, had no reason to complain of any want of dissipation, of such a nature as it was.

But there were certain high occasions when the two contending factions were content for the time being to put on one side their differences, and to meet on one common ground. The great annual flower-show was one of these, and the Academy Ball was another. The county gentry, who ordinarily held themselves somewhat aloof from the little squabbles and petty cliques of the town, on these two high festivals deigned to take part in the festivities; and the two factions, both anxious to stand well with the county magnates, sunk their rivalry for the nonce, or only rivalled each other in the assiduous court they paid to the rare visitors.

It was the evening of the Academy Ball. The assembly-rooms were fast filling with the *élite* of both factions of Engil society, and here and there, the centre of an obsequious group, was a great county family. At the

top of the principal room sat, for he was unable to stand, the great peer of the district. A terrible old man was this peer, and the county was full of ugly stories about him, but that did not prevent anyone from paying assiduous court to him. A sardonic smile was perpetually on the old man's face; he despised the bowing throng, even while he accepted their homage. This withered old man in the faded uniform, with the posse of orders on his breast, had seen some life in his eighty years of existence. In his hot youth he had been a soldier—foremost where the fiercest strife raged, cool amidst the shower of bullets—he had one or two in him now, unpleasant relics of other days. Then he had been hand and glove with the Regent, one of the wildest of his *poins*; there was not a debauch at Carlton House in which he had not participated, not a scan-

dal connected with these mad, sinful times in which this old man's name had not been prominent. Good name, fortune, everything had gone in that wild hunt after pleasure—everything but the iron constitution, which nothing seemed capable of injuring. He kept the ball up to the last; he tired out all his compeers in the mad race to ruin; and then, having drunk the cup to the dregs, he all of a sudden retired to his castle in the north, where he had lived ever since a secluded, sinful life, stray rumours of which oozed out among the quiet country folk every now and then, and made them shake their heads, and hint that the “old Lord” must have entered into a compact with the devil. But the hoary old sinner was wise in his generation. He knew how to cultivate a certain popularity, which made people wink at the stories current about him. His

finances had come round a little by this time, and he was liberal with his subscriptions for any purpose of a public nature. When he drove abroad in his carriage, he used to scatter coppers among the street children, and perhaps no man was ever a more consummate master of the art of blarney. Here he was to-night, feeble and decrepit, for he was over eighty years old; but with his bright cold eye undimmed, his *suave bonhomie* as fresh as in the old Regency days.

Close to him was the opposition peer—a pillar of the Established Church, a staunch Tory, a heavy, respectable, middle-aged man, with a pretty wife, who humoured him in his pompous self-willed littlenesses, and in reality twisted him round her little finger. A hard-living, red-nosed baronet, with a terribly encumbered rent-roll, and a large family of sons, was in earnest conversation

with a sharp Engil attorney, who enjoyed a well-deserved repute for effecting compromises in cases of pecuniary embarrassment, with, to quote his own words, “secrecy and despatch.” The great heiress of the county, a masculine young lady, to whom an old uncle she had never seen had left a sum, the income for which was reputed to amount to £12,000 a year, was chatting with much affability to a small laird, who eked out his patrimony by a little judicious horse-coping on the quiet. The lady’s tastes were peculiar—it was currently alleged she had refused the son of a duke, a real live earl, baronets without end, and a perfect shoal of clergymen, and had publicly announced her intention of horsewhipping the next individual of the male sex who should address her with matrimonial intentions, as she was determined to devote her life to the enjoyments

of horse-riding and salmon-fishing. She was just the young Amazon to carry such a threat into execution ; but the horse-coping laird was not without some sly hopes on his own account, and the red-nosed baronet aforesaid had been heard to avouch a willingness to take two to one that she would finish by marrying her groom.

Engil was very well off for clergymen, and they all came to the Academy ball. There were the two Established Church ministers, who vied with each other in ponderous fatness, the token of easy lives, good living, and no doubt good consciences ; there was a Free Church minister, with a face like a ferret and a splendid pile of forehead—a man brimful of intellect and of venom ; an Episcopalian clergyman, tall, courteous, and bland, more a man of the world than his brethren ; and an Independ-

ent parson, who had mistaken his vocation altogether, for nature certainly meant him for a leading low comedian. We have already said that Engil was strong in lawyers and bank agents, and they were all here to-night. Here was Mr. Campbell, an empty-headed but plausible man, with a loud voice and a confident “Ha! ha!” manner, given to long-sounding speeches at meetings of the Town Council, and to the hectoring of new Councillors who ventured to set up an opinion contrary to his own; a man reputed to have been the cause of the permanent aberration of their little modicum of intellect in sundry wretched witnesses who had the misfortune to undergo a cross-examination at his hands in the Sheriff Court. Here was Mr. Strong, who belied his name, for he was a little, feeble, King-Charles-spaniel sort of man, who spoke in a hesitating whisper,

as if he were timid at the sound of his own voice. Old maiden ladies loved him and trusted him, and his character for a perfect intensity of discretion extended far and wide. Then there was Mr. Trant, the self-made lawyer, quite as small a man as Mr. Strong, but of another stamp altogether, being upright, plump, and self-confident—a bantam-cock of a man. He had raised himself from the dregs of the people by sheer force of energy, and he never took a cause in hand into which he did not throw himself with as much enthusiasm as if it were his own. Then there was the “sharp practice” lawyer, in conversation with the red-nosed baronet, not in the very best odour with his legal confrères, who gave him the cold shoulder when they could, and would have shewn their feeling more overtly had they not had a wholesome dread of the un-

scrupulous man who did not trouble himself about his character. We must leave the batch of junior partners unsketched, and the bank agents will not delay us long. The painfully respectable bank agent, who had the accounts of all the parsons and old maiden ladies ; the flippant bank agent, with a dash of the Jew in him, who was reputed not to be above winking at a little kite-fly-ing ; the jolly bank agent, whose capacity for whisky-toddy was unlimited, and by whom the farmers swore to a man ; and the aristocratic bank agent, the second son of a baronet, who had all the country gentry accounts, and drove a carriage and pair. The doctors mustered very strong in the ball-room, and quite eclipsed the lawyers in the matter of popularity with the ladies—the older ones paying court to the matrons and dowagers, the younger ones, out of whom

all the leaven of their student days had not been expressed, finding much favour in the eyes of the younger members of the fair sex.

As for the “curry powder” aristocracy, as they were sneeringly designated by the rival class, their name was legion—from the little withered old Brigadier-General, who was a fighting man fifty years ago, and in his mummified state of preservation, looked good for lasting another fifty, to the purse retired Ceylon planter, whom heat and ease had bloated into an oleaginous rotundity instead of parching into leather. And, lastly, there were the two rival newspaper editors. Editor No. 1 was a decent, gentlemanly fellow, with a natural literary instinct; but he never offended anybody in his life. He would emasculate the most telling sentence in his “sub’s” leader, if he thought it could

be tortured into the remotest semblance of a personality by the meanest dweller in the county ; and the most difficult task with him in the world was, when reporting a cattle show or a flower show, how to praise the first prize-taker duly without deprecating the second, and delicately to insinuate to the second that he ought to have been first, without wounding the *amour propre* of the latter and giving offence to the judges. The rival editor was a man of a totally different stamp. War was the breath of his nostrils ; he was never happy except when pulverising an antagonist ; he had always a couple or so of actions for libel on his hands, was a clever, unscrupulous, characterless fellow, and was shrewdly suspected of infidel tendencies. For the rest, there was the rector of the academy—a pompous, bald-headed man, with a wife like a feather bolster ; the junior

masters, shy and *distract*, but pedantic in their direst distress ; a swell farmer or two, and a very select sprinkling of the shopocracy—tolerated on this occasion because of the cosmopolitan character of the ball.

CHAPTER IX.

IN a quiet corner of the smaller room sat honest Lady Grant, and the young lady to whom she was acting *chaperon*—none other indeed than our friend Mary Home. The Grants had brought Mary down to Engil with them the day after their dinner-party, and the news of Hector's abrupt departure had not reached any of the party. Old Sir Dugald had brought them here, found them what he called a "guid billet," and then stalked off to talk military gossip with the old Indians. But they were in no want of cavaliers. Scarcely had they taken their seats in the quiet corner, when it be-

came quiet no longer. The young lairds, a dandy officer or two down on leave, the juniors of the legal profession, and the young medicos, all seemed to find an unwonted attraction in the quiet corner. It could hardly have been good Lady Grant who was the magnet—sensible, kindly old soul that she was, the young gentleman of Engil would scarcely have been so mysteriously fond of the corner had she sat there alone. No ; it was Mary who was the great attraction, and no wonder. She was unwontedly beautiful to-night—her jet-black hair and rich, warm complexion contrasting so charmingly with the simple white ball-dress, and the single white flower which formed her head-dress. Mary's mind was not at ease. She had been sorely tried the other night during her interview with Hector, and had not recovered her elasticity of

spirit; but the perturbation of her mind lent an additional charm to her rare beauty. There was something bewitching in the melancholy of her splendid eyes, in the pensiveness of that beautiful cheek. And after all, Mary was human; if a little sick at heart, girl-like, her spirits rose in unison with the gay scene around her. The lively music, the footfall of the dancers in the principal room, the brilliant lights, the kaleidoscopic motion all around her, stirred her instinctively from her languor. She was herself again—bright, sparkling, *piquante*, and ere long her tablets were nearly full, and she was whirling in the mazy waltz under the able steermanship of a dashing young hussar.

Our list of company is not yet complete, but the omitted one was a late comer, and 'twas only now he entered on the scene.

Mr. Fitzloom it was, dressed with the utmost care, and as great a dandy as profuse jewelry and multifarious chains could make him. The assiduous application of raw beef-steaks had worked wonders upon his mouth, umwhile dreadfully distorted and swollen from the effects of Hector's straight right-hander. A little puffing was all that could be discerned, and this was hardly noticeable to the cursory observer; although when he spoke an ugly gap was visible in his cherished front teeth, two of which had undergone summary dislodgement from Hector's knuckles. But on the whole Fitzloom was in high feather, and having dined rather heavily (which was the cause of his lateness), the moment he saw Mary he formed the doughty resolution that ere the night was over he and she should understand each other. So the cunning tactician, hav-

ing ascertained that the young lady was under the wing of Lady Grant, went and sat down by her side in Mary's vacant place, astonishing the old lady by the unwonted desire to make himself agreeable which he displayed. Soon Mary, escorted by her military partner, returned to claim her seat, and Fitzloom had the opportunity of requesting the favour, &c. Mary would have given the world had her tablets been full, but there was a quadrille shortly after supper for which she was disengaged ; and Fitzloom congratulated himself on the astuteness of his generalship when he saw his name pencilled down in the vacant space. Soon Mary was claimed by her partner for the next dance, and her seat by Lady Grant was vacant again ; but this time Fitzloom did not care for renewing his conversation with the old lady. He wandered

away in the direction of that favourite haunt of his—the buffet; and from this spot he hardly strayed till the supper-room was thrown open. The fact is, this pattern gentleman was assiduously engaged in the operation of “priming” himself; for although on most occasions his native and acquired impudence was quite equal to any emergency, he was, like most other cads, not quite at home in the company of what he himself would have styled “prudent women.” And although he would not allow himself to doubt of his success for a moment, yet he hardly felt in the “conquering hero” frame of mind, as the time drew nigher and nigher when he was “to come up to the scratch,” and he swallowed glass after glass of wine to inspire him with Dutch courage. This had the desired effect, and when the time arrived when he was entitled to claim

Mary as his partner in the quadrille, he was in that pleasant, callous frame of mind which he himself mentally expressed as “being up to anything—from skinning a pig to smothering an archbishop.”

The quadrille was over, and his opportunity had arrived. A small conservatory was attached to the dancing-room, which Fitzloom had decided on as the scene of his great deed. Had Mary had the slightest idea of the reason for which he so pressed her to come and look at the rare fern in the conservatory, she would have ruthlessly balked him in the outset; but not having the shadow of a suspicion as to the cause of his pertinacity, she yielded, although with a reluctance for which she could not account to herself. The conservatory was empty, for the door was in a retired corner, and probably few were aware of its existence.

The moment the pair entered, Fitzloom opened the campaign in his most insinuating style. "Are you fond of the North, Miss Home?"

"Of course I am," replied Mary simply. "Are you not fond of your own native land?"

"Well, egad, I can't say I have any particular spooniness on one place more than another; but what I mean is, have you no ambition to see more of the world in the way of travel?"

"Yes," answered Mary, simply enough. "There are many beautiful places in England of which I have read which I am most anxious to see; and I would give anything to see Italy, and Spain, and the Alps, and Greece. Indeed, I would like to travel for two or three years, but I don't suppose I ever shall," she added.

“Why not?” asked Fitzloom.

“Because papa is getting old; and besides, he could not leave his parish—he could not spare me for so long, nor could I endure to be away from him; else to travel is the dearest wish of my heart.”

“Then, Mary, you can fulfil it to your heart’s content, if you will only marry me,” blurted out Fitzloom. “Yes, Mary, by gad, I love you dearly, and would make you a good husband, and all that sort of thing. By Jove, you are so lovely a girl that I can’t do without you, and that’s a fact. I’m all serene now, and ready to settle down and be no end of a domesticated fellow.”

Mary had heard this extraordinary declaration with mingled doubts of the gentleman’s sanity and sobriety. He was so incoherently voluble that she could not get a

chance of interrupting him, till he had to stop for want of breath. Then she quietly remarked,

“Mr. Fitzloom, what nonsense you do talk! Take me back to Lady Grant.”

“Never, dearest girl, till you promise to be mine,” exclaimed the impetuous swain, striking an attitude. “By George, you don’t know how I adore you. Tell me, Mary, is it all square?”

“I don’t know what you mean, sir,” said Mary, who was becoming a little afraid. “I must go back to Lady Grant.”

“And you must answer me first,” said he vehemently, for he thought he was “winning easy.” “You must say yes, and make me happy! Won’t you? Only the one little word.”

“No; a thousand times no, Mr. Fitzloom,” said Mary decidedly, for she saw she

must treat him as serious. "I am much obliged to you, but it is quite out of the question. Now take me to Lady Grant."

"Stop, stop, Miss Home; you can't be serious. Remember the wealth that would be yours, and the honour and the pleasure you will have, of which you can't have the remotest conception. Why, I might marry an earl's daughter if I liked."

"Pray do then, Mr. Fitzloom, and don't think of me any more. What you say is not the slightest temptation to me, and I must again ask you to leave this place."

"Now be reasonable, Miss Home; you are so dreadfully impulsive, you won't give yourself time to think. If all I have said to you has no weight with you, I've got another argument in the background which I know you'll think a good one. Will you hear it?"

He uttered these words with so much

significance that in spite of her anxiety for the termination of the distasteful interview, she could not help feeling some curiosity to learn what was the tenor of this redoubtable argument. Guarding herself against even the appearance of yielding—

“No argument,” she said, “which you can possibly use, Mr. Fitzloom, can have the slightest effect upon me ; but nevertheless the fact of your professing to have one which in your estimation is so powerful, seems so extraordinary to me, that I would fain have some enlightenment on the subject.”

Fitzloom was delighted. He made sure that a breach had been effected in the fortress hitherto so disdainfully impregnable ; and if the truth must be told about him, his nature was so despicable that he was ready, if he could not conquer, to stab out of sheer malevolence.

“Miss Home,” said he, “I believe you are going to leave Glenfiloch.”

“Yes,” she answered simply, wondering where on earth he was wandering to now.

“You are pleased at the change to Fetternoon, I make no doubt?”

“Oh! quite delighted,” answered she, still more amazed.

“Lord Nairn gave your father the presentation, did he not?”

“He did,” replied she, as an uncomfortable feeling stole over her that mischief was in the wind.

“Have you any means of knowing what the Earl’s motives were?”

“No direct means, but any one who is acquainted with my father’s character will conjecture the reason readily enough.”

“You have heard Lord Nairn’s character—think you he is a likely man to present

your father to one of his livings out of a conscientious appreciation of his deserts?"

"Oh! we must judge no man too harshly; and for my part, the absence of any conceivable motive of another character is so obvious, that there seems no alternative but to believe in Lord Nairn's good intentions."

"Suppose I supply you with a conceivable motive?"

Her heart sank within her with a nameless foreboding, as she faintly answered,

"If you can with truth, I shall feel obliged to you."

"Well, look here, Miss Home; the truth is, you owe this pleasant change to me. I asked Lord Nairn for the presentation to your father, and I did it, thinking it would help me with his daughter. This is my argument—isn't it a good one?"

The miserable girl's head swam, so that

she had a struggle to keep herself from falling. In another moment she had recovered herself, and demanded in an agitated voice, "Is this true, Mr. Fitzloom?"

"As true as gospel, Miss Home," replied he, mistaking the cause of her emotion. "Ask Lord Nairn himself; he'll corroborate me at once. And now, when you know you owe this to me, you'll make me a happy man, won't you?"

"Mr. Fitzloom, I would tell you that you had insulted me in the grossest possible way, if I thought you could understand me. You confuse between Scotland and Turkey, sir. Pray take me to Lady Grant at once, or I shall go alone," and she moved toward the door of the conservatory.

Fitzloom was furious, but the manner of the girl overawed him, and in sulky silence he escorted her to the side of her chaperon.

Then he took himself off, without so much as the formality of a bow. His wine bill that night at the Royal was a curiosity.

Lady Grant's watchful eye at once recognised that something was seriously amiss with Mary. She had noticed this even before she sat down, and the moment Fitzloom took his departure she asked what was the matter.

"Take me out, Lady Grant, or I shall faint," was the distressed girl's reply, uttered in a voice the tones of which verified the words.

Lady Grant was a woman of action. The time for explanation would come later. She had the General by her side with a speed which showed how obedient a husband he was ; and that worthy officer, without asking a single question, tucked his lady under one arm and Mary under the other, and had

them at the cloak-room door before their sudden withdrawal was observed.

The carriage had not yet arrived, so they started to walk home through the beautiful summer night. Mary walked silently leaning on the General's arm, as he stumped manfully along on his wooden leg, Lady Grant meanwhile discoursing on miscellaneous topics with a fluency quite rare in her, but the kindly object of which Mary recognised with gratitude. When they reached their friend's house, her ladyship quietly took a candle off the lobby table and took her young friend straight up into her bedroom ; and then, and not till then, did her feminine curiosity overmaster her.

In as few words as possible Mary imparted to her the information she had received as to the source of Lord Nairn's generosity. The old soldier's wife at first inclined to the view

that it would serve both Fitzloom and his lordship right to treat the former's statement as an untruth, and allow the translation to go on as if nothing had occurred ; but Mary fired up at the idea in a way which frightened her ladyship, and a little consideration showed her how base such conduct would be in Mary herself, and how unworthy of the character of a man and a minister would be the acceptance of such disgraceful terms of preferment on the part of Mr. Home. There was clearly but one course open to father and daughter alike—black as the future looked. Before Lady Grant left her young friend's room, it was settled that the Feshiedale party should leave Engil early on the following morning on their homeward journey.

CHAPTER X.

ANYONE who is going from the Horse Guards or Downing Street to Westminster *viâ* King Street, will see, if he happens to look to his right when about half-way down King Street, a narrow lane, which forms a *cul de sac* at the further end. We say if he happen to look, because the chance is very probable, so little noticeable is there about this alley, that the casual wayfarer might pass it a dozen times without observing it. Its leading feature of an inanimate character is beyond question hoardings. At least three-fourths of its length on both sides are lined with these

peculiarly enlivening erections, which contribute so largely to give a street a nice, habitable, prosperous appearance ; in which respect, indeed, they are only surpassed by those mysterious houses at the Blackfriars end of Stamford Street. If we are tempted to explore this Westminster lane, we discover, after passing a long tract of hoarding, that we are opposite one of the fronts of the new India Office, which rises out of the wilderness of hoardings like an architectural Venus out of a dismal sea. On the left-hand side, at the King Street end, stand a few dilapidated houses, only prevented from toppling over by massive timber shorings. This woe-begone, begrimed, shabby, dissipated block of houses, which appears as if it were ashamed to look across the mud at the staring hoardings which confront it, is evidently a mere fragment—a remnant

spared by the pick-axe of the destroyer only for a time. On the gable of the public-house, an unwashed, mangy-looking place, which is at the end furthest off King Street, are visible the relics of the next-door house, in the shape of patches of dingy paper, and the niches for the removed grates. It has already gone the way which the public-house and its dingy compeers will soon follow, and its site is part of the long waste ground extending to the very verge of the park, ruled over supreme by solitude and hoardings.

Still, dismal as this fragmentary lane and its frowsy environs are, it seems to have a special attraction for certain persons. These persons are tall, straight, well-formed men, upright of carriage, square of shoulders, swaggering and jaunty of gait. Further, they dress not as do the ordinary fre-

quenters of our London streets. A very large proportion are apparently specially arrayed with a single eye to the irritation of turkey cocks and irascible bulls, their coats being of scarlet, more or less effulgent in hue. Here again is a gentleman who, whether from a consuming desire to cast obloquy on these red-coated folks, or for some other reason, has perversely arrayed his nether limbs in a garment of that hue, while his coat is of the deepest blue, adorned with gold lace. Others, again, sport blue all over; and there are one or two who, probably just to look out of the common, or perhaps having a leaning to Fenianism, adopt "the wearing of the green," to the exclusion of any other colour.

These imposing fellows manifest further an eccentric liking for strips of divers colours sewed on to sundry exterior parts of their

clothing. Some have a narrow red piping down the outside of either leg, while others have a much broader band of yellow or white in the same position ; and one and all delight to ornament the erect collars of their coats with a brilliant contrast of colour, ranging from drab to sky blue. They appear men who have attained a fair degree of civilization, but nevertheless they manifest at least one of the leading traits of savage character in their love for bright buttons, which they stick all over the upper part of their persons, in positions where it is impossible for them ever to be found of any service. They also appear to have a chronic dread of being set upon incontinently by some hostile race, for they all wear weapons of defence and offence, which shows that they have no abiding confidence in the ability of the police to protect them. And

in their head-dresses it is not impossible that the philosophical and discerning eye might detect another lingering trace of savagedom, for these are evidently designed with the view of striking terror into the heart of a foe. Some are of shining brass, with nodding horsehair plumes on a pinnacle at the top ; others are formed of the shaggy skin of the bear, and tower aloft into an awful altitude, while the wearer's face glowers menacingly out of the tangled hair which overshadows it ; others of these men again at first sight appear to be given to wear tokens of their ladies' love in the shape of muffs upon their martial heads. Of others the head-dress is comparatively plain, with a parti-coloured ball stuck on the top, cunningly designed, no doubt, to impress the foe with the belief that it is a veritable implement of war, kept in position only by

the volition of the wearer of the head-dress, and liable at any moment to be hurled against him with unerring aim. Some of these men, indeed, carry so far a desire to be terrible in the eyes of their foes, that they wear steel projections from the heels of their boots, having the end set with sharp spikes, capable of tearing very severely the flesh of a prostrate antagonist.

Notwithstanding, however, all these martial arrangements, these stalwart men seem very peaceably inclined. They stand at the King Street corner, chatting to each other, then they take short turns up the dismal lane, or along King Street, or out into Parliament Street. It may be, indeed, that they are scouting for the foe; but if such is the case, their discipline is decidedly loose. For they have a strong propensity for dropping into the public-houses in the vicinity,

with the Hebes of which resorts they are always on the best terms, and “two pennorth of whisky hot” will be found, on careful investigation, to be the most general shape in which they imbibe refreshment. Then they have another saunter and another gossip at the corner, and then another “two pennorth,” and to the casual observer appear to lead wholly aimless, lazy, desultory lives.

But this is a mistake. Every man of them is there for a purpose. Let an able-bodied young man come along King Street, with a certain restless wandering of the eye, and a hesitation in his gait, and lo ! the loungers in the gaudy attire are stirred into sudden action. The able-bodied young man is pounced upon—straightway conducted into a neighbouring public-house, treated to anything he has a mind for, and finally remun-

erated, for having conferred the honour of his company upon his liberal entertainer, with a certain silver coin, known far and wide as the "Queen's Shilling."

Reader, the dingy lane is Charles Street, the head-quarters of the recruiting system, and the mysterious men in brilliant raiment are recruiting-sergeants. At the time of our story, Charles Street was not the miserable wreck it is now. It had always a "slummy" character about it; but it was at least a street of houses, not of hoardings. Instead of the one dingy public-house now lurking under the timber shoring, it then boasted of three; the "Hampshire Hog" and the "Cheshire Cheese" being the two great military haunts. What scenes had they witnessed in their time! How much sin and sorrow; too late remorse, too late forgiveness! Could they have spoken, they might

have told of the hasty, petulant lad rushing down Charles Street, and over a glass at the bar taking the shilling at the hands of the plausible recruiting sergeant ; and of the father, on the morrow, repenting him of his angry word, coming into the street with anxious heart, and with trembling, eager hand doling out the smart-money to the spruce man in uniform, and carrying his boy home with him in joy. Of the forlorn widow they might have spoken, come here to make inquiry about her wayward lad, and of her deep-drawn sigh of despair when callously told that he had been “sworn in,” and was beyond power of redemption. In many a British household has Charles Street been cursed with bitter curses ; and yet has it not been, so to speak, the cradle of heroes ? Has it not been to Charles Street that Britain owed the presence in the ranks

of the men who went up the slope of the Alma at the double?—the men who galloped up the valley of Balaclava in the teeth of a whirlwind of shot and shell? Fathers may curse, and mothers' hearts may break, but the Millennium has not yet come, and Charles Street is still an important institution in our land.

The summer twilight was just beginning to settle down over the murky purlieus of Charles Street, and the martial gentlemen of the kidnapping—we beg pardon, recruiting profession were thinking of abandoning for the night their lynx-eyed patrol. But just then a well-built, clean-limbed young fellow, with an eye like a stag, came round the corner out of King Street, and having looked up at the name of the street on the corner house, walked slowly up Charles Street. There was an immediate stir among the recruiting-sergeants.

“By George, Harry, what a splendid Hussar he'd make!” remarked one, resplendent in a hanging pelisse.

“Confound you, Dick,” responded Harry. “You think all the smart men in England were born to be Hussars. The young fellow would look devilish well under a Lancer's hat.” Harry was a Lancer himself.

“Guid faith,” struck in the burly sergeant of the Scots Greys, “the lad's just the stamp for a ‘Bonny Jock,’ an' gin I'm no mistaen, he's ane o' the breed.”

In the meantime the young man had come to a halt opposite the animated group of sergeants. The Scots Grey, with all the national anxiety not to lose the first chance of a good thing, crossed the street, and smiling graciously his blandest grin, which was not of the most fascinating type, for the worthy sergeant's cheek had been laid open

by a Cossack at Balaclava, he courteously inquired, "Whether the young man had any thoughts o' joinin' the honourable profession of arms."

"I'm anxious to enlist," curtly replied the stranger.

"I see you're a kindly Scot by yer tongue," pawkily insinuated the sergeant, "an' of coorse ye'll like to be amang your countrymen. Ye'll be a corporal in three months if ye'll take the shilling for the Greys."

"I don't care," answered the stranger, "what corps I join, provided there is some chance of seeing active service in it. In fact, I want to enlist in some regiment which is in India now. They say there's always something going on there."

The remainder of the group had one by one followed the sergeant of the Greys across the street, and were within earshot of this

doughty utterance. It found an immediate response in the bosom of a grim old sergeant of the 30th Light Dragoons, who struck in with promptitude—

“Then the old 30th is the corps for you, my lad. We have the best colonel in the service, as handsome a uniform as any, and, by George! there is seldom anything warm on foot that the old Strawboots are not in the thick of it. Is it a bargain?”

“All right, sergeant, here’s my hand on it.”

“Wait a bit, young man, we must go through the formalities. Attend to what I say. Are you free, able, and willing to serve her Majesty Queen Victoria in the 30th Regiment of Light Dragoons? You are not an apprentice or a married man, or above the proper age, or, so far as you are aware, physically unqualified?”

Hector Macdonald—for he was in very truth the recruit—could not help smiling as the sergeant, with exemplary exactitude, and a pomposity which would have qualified him on the spot for the office of “parochial beadle,” enunciated this formula. To the list of formal queries he replied by a general negative; whereupon the sergeant, with much *empressement*, produced a shilling, and with the cabalistic words “In the Queen’s name,” placed it in the palm of Hector’s hand. He was enlisted; the young laird was now a “simple soldier.”

The ceremony once concluded, Hector found the old sergeant disposed to become very friendly. His first suggestion was rather enigmatical to the former, it being to the effect that it would be advisable “to wet his commission;” an operation by no means lucid to Hector’s apprehension, who, in the

first place, was in possession of no commission that he **knew** of, and, secondly, could not see the precise object to be gained in "wetting" it, if he had one. A little explanation, however, on the sergeant's part, having an immediate reference to "drinking the shilling," soon opened his eyes. Although it did strike him, *en passant*, that such a feat, if the sergeant was to be taken literally, would certainly be an uncommon one, he was not green enough not to know now what his preceptor was driving at; and having still some money left in his pocket (the balance of his quarter's allowance, which was all he had brought from home), he invited the half-dozen cavalry sergeants to share in the performance of "wetting his commission" at the bar of the Hampshire Hog. They were nothing loth, and the unwonted treat from a recruit of a couple of

bottles of wine quite opened their hearts. Hector thought he had fallen upon a set of very decent, friendly fellows—so profuse was each sergeant in protestations of anxiety to do him a good turn, and in offers of advice as to the best methods of avoiding the rocks and shallows of his future career. Another bottle was the means of evolving a wonderful concurrence of sentiment, that his promotion would be miraculously speedy and rapid; and a particularly sanguine sergeant, as he “buzzed” the bottle, went the length of prophesying that he would not serve many years till he was a cornet, and entitled to a reverential salute from the sergeant himself. Hector felt inclined to call for another bottle, for it pleased him greatly to find so experienced a man thus enthusiastic as to his prospects; but his own sergeant, probably not relishing the idea that

the plucking of the pigeon should be in so many hands, interposed and broke up the symposium.

When the others had gone, and he and Hector were left alone together, the old sergeant explained to his recruit his position. He would be entitled to a day's full pay next morning, less the deduction of $3\frac{1}{2}d.$ for lodging money, for which he would be entitled to a bed in the rendezvous; but he strongly counselled Hector to find quarters elsewhere for the night. The rendezvous, he explained, was a villanous place, where all the scum of the earth, who enlisted because they had not a copper to bless themselves with, pigged for the night, and he would be horribly disgusted with its filth and riot. In the morning the sergeant would take him to the medical department, where he would have to undergo an in-

spection by the staff-surgeon, and then he would have to take the oath, see the field officer, and generally go through the necessary formularies prior to being ready for transmission to the depot of his regiment.

CHAPTER XI.

THE old sergeant left Hector standing at the bar of the "Hampshire Hog." The young recruit was utterly friendless in the great metropolis, and notwithstanding that the step he had just taken had been the result of mature deliberation, it was not unnatural that he should feel a certain sinking of spirit within him, now that he was committed beyond retrieval. Thoughts of home, and of her for whose sake he had relinquished his birthright and his position in society, came crowding fast and thick upon his mind, and for the moment he felt that the task he had set himself was too

much for him. Anxious for solitude, he left the reeking public-house, and going down the steps at the end of Charles Street, found himself under the great trees in the park. After the monotony of the seemingly endless streets by which his country eye had been tortured ever since he entered London, the sight of these was very soothing, and the sound of the soft summer-night breeze rustling among the leafy greenery was the sweetest of music in his ears. Long he paced up and down in the long shadows which they cast athwart the gravel, his mind gradually recovering its tone. When at length he turned aside to go again into Charles Street, his resolves were firm and high, his courageous determination to follow out the career on which he had embarked fixed and sure.

He had even resolved that he would not

accept the sergeant's advice as to seeking quarters elsewhere than at the rendezvous. He was now a soldier, he argued; then why, because he happened to have a little money in his pocket, should he seek to avoid the disagreeables which he should have to encounter of necessity, were it not for that fortuitous circumstance? So he walked boldly into the "Hampshire Hog" again, and demanded his ticket for admission into the rendezvous. The landlord seemed surprised, wondering probably that one who was able to pay for bottles of wine should manifest a taste so peculiar as an inclination to spend the night in such a fashion; but he handed over the ticket with no remark, save the caution to be careful he did not lose anything before morning. The rendezvous was situated immediately behind the public-house, and

Hector, who was tired and sleepy, made his way to it at once.

He gave up his ticket to an old man at the door, and was told to go upstairs into the room to the right, and take the first vacant bed he came to. Two more recruits came in at the same time, and following in their wake, Hector found his way upstairs and into the room to which he had been directed. The scene which met his astonished eye was to him a passing strange one. The room was long and low. Its walls might at one time have rejoiced in a coating of whitewash, but it must have been beyond the memory of man. By the light of the two miserable candles which stood on the dirty table, he saw that the sides of the room were lined with narrow pallets, so close together as almost to touch each other. Most of these were already oc-

cupied. Some of the occupants were wrapped in deep slumber, and Hector marvelled, as he gazed, how it was possible for any man to sleep in the midst of such a pandemonium of din. A stand-up fight was being briskly carried on at the upper end of the room, the combatants bleeding profusely, and swearing the most horrible oaths, a language in which their respective backers and the spectators were also extremely proficient. Half-way up the room a vocal concert of a hilarious character was in full swing, the leading performer being a young Cockney, in a ragged shirt and no boots to speak of, and the chorus was taken up by a select circle of friends, whose voices, if not melodious, betokened at least a highly satisfactory soundness of lung. A few beds further on, a batch of practical jokers were playfully experimenting on the countenance of

a young fellow who lay in a heavy drunken sleep. They had already succeeded in converting him into a blackamoor, and were now demonstrating their skill as amateur barbers in decorating his hair with a mixture of tallow and dirt, in which they inserted straws and feathers with much skill and a highly novel effect. In a corner a maudlin bumpkin, who had taken the shilling and afterwards "the rue," sat blubbering most piteously, interspersing his paroxysms of tears with sundry reminiscences of "feyther and mother," and a certain young woman of the name of "Bet," who must, it appeared, inevitably succumb to the information that her Ben had 'listed. A chronic dread of "Rushians" also appeared to distress him greatly—and, altogether, the Queen was scarcely to be congratulated on the martial ardour of this new ad-

dition to the strength of her land forces.

Although the fetid odour of the miserable den almost made him sick, and the sights disgusted and shocked him, Hector made his way into the quietest corner he could find, and looked for a vacant pallet. He found one without much difficulty, but an investigation of the condition of the bed-clothes was so unsatisfactory, that he could not bring himself to risk contamination by stripping and going to bed in the orthodox manner. So he lay down in his clothes, and as sleep seemed out of the question, he turned his enforced wakefulness to account, in studying the human nature of which types so peculiar were plentiful around him. The result was not of an inspiring character, and it sickened the high-bred lad to think that men such as he saw now around him, fighting, blaspheming, yelling

Cockney slang, were to be his future companions. With an effort he withdrew his mind from the painful consideration, and tried to think of Mary and the past, although, in the circumstances, such thoughts seemed a species of sacrilege. And at length, although the din and clamour showed little symptoms of abatement, Nature asserted her claims even *in arduis rebus*, and the wearied Hector dropped into a profound slumber.

CHAPTER XII.

THE sunbeams were struggling through the filthy windows of the rendezvous in Charles Street, when Hector awoke with a racking headache, and a taste in his mouth as if he had been down a common sewer. The majority of those who had spent the night in the dismal place were already up, and Hector was only too glad to follow their example. He jumped up and looked around for some washing apparatus, but nothing of the kind was visible. Then for the first time he perceived that hands had been busy with him during his sleep. His collar was loose, and his shirt front unfastened. The reason

soon became apparent. He had been, as a fellow near him pithily put it, "fairly skinned." His necktie, shirt-studs, and breastpin had been adroitly filched; his outer pockets had been turned inside out, and every article they contained, from a cardcase to a dog-whistle, abstracted; his watch and chain had been spirited away, and his purse would doubtless have experienced the same delicate attention, had he not taken the precaution of placing it in an inside pocket. Even his cap was gone. Hector was angry enough, of course, at being thus rifled—but what redress had he? Only a few fellows were left in the room, and they were profuse in their protestations of willingness to undergo the strictest search. One of them inquired, with an air of the deepest interest, whether the watch bore a maker's number? Hector said it did; whereupon his questioner,

with simulated gravity, remarked that “number and all was gone;” an observation sufficiently self-evident, and not very consolatory. From the laughter of the audience, it appeared to contain a latent jest of a highly tickling character; but Hector failed to see the point, and strode off indignantly, to try whether any redress was to be obtained downstairs. The only consolation he met with there was the information that he was a “d——d fool” not to know better than to take anything of a larger value than twopence into the rendezvous, for that instances had been known of a man’s shirt having been stolen off his back in that highly moral haunt; and that he had about as much chance of ever hearing anything of his property as of being made a field-marshal early in the ensuing week. Further, the official tendered him the sagacious advice to “grin and bear

it"—a feat the first postulate of which Hector felt no inclination to comply with ; but as regarded the latter, he was unable to discover an alternative. So he went and had a wash and breakfast at a coffee-house, and then met his friend the sergeant, who consoled very feelingly with him on the subject of his loss—no doubt sincerely, since probably he had himself anticipated becoming the proprietor, at a nominal valuation, of Hector's superfluous property. It was by this time ten o'clock, and Charles Street was in full life. The recruiting sergeants promenaded majestically in full dress, waiting for parade ; the recruits in various stages of dilapidation, and of all classes, from Hector himself down to the forlorn chawbacon and the impudent street cad, who had been boasting the previous night how many bounties he had grabbed and mizzled with, were

sauntering purposelessly up and down the pavement, trying to kill time in desultory conversation.

By-and-by Hector's sergeant mustered him and a couple of other recruits, and took them to the medical department, to undergo the test of the surgeon's examination. On reaching Decahay Street, they entered first a dingy lobby. The sergeant led the way down a dark staircase, and stepped into a gloomy kitchen-looking apartment, followed by his recruits. He then told them it was necessary that they should strip and undergo the luxury of a bath, before appearing in the presence of the medical officer. The place was not a very inviting bath-room, but there seemed no help for it, and so Hector stripped and went into a neighbouring apartment, which was pointed out to him as the bath-room. The light which fell

from a window high up in the wall was at first too dull for him to discern objects clearly; but when he got used to it, he saw a naked man towelling himself lustily, remarking at the same time that that was the first bath he had taken since he "came out of quod." Further investigation showed him a stone bath up in a recess, in which two gentlemen were sedulously washing themselves. One was of a playful temperament, and was splashing the water over his companion, who, of a more philosophical disposition, was remarking, in a spirit of scientific inquiry, how curiously prone dirt was to "barken." He further observed that soap was no use; it would require a piece of pumice-stone to fetch off "them cursed kneecaps," said kneecaps being apparently an incrustation of dirt in the region of the patella. Hector waited patiently until

these two gentlemen had emerged from the bath, in the hope that a change of water would be made; but a gruff man, who handed the towels through a loophole, asked him "whether he was a Dook?" and made a sarcastic reference to his probable fondness for a tepid in preference to a cold bath. So Hector was compelled to step into the filthy fluid, thick with the soap and dirt of previous bathers, and to go through the form, although he did not wet himself above the knees. When he re-emerged into the outer room, the sergeant told him to put his coat on; and arrayed in this highly picturesque but not very decent costume, he traversed the passages and the flight of stairs which led to the doctor's sanctum. Here he found a collection of stork-like individuals, dressed much after the same airy style, awaiting their turn to go inside.

He had to wait some time for his ; but at last it came, and denuding himself, by order, of his coat, he stalked *in puris naturalibus* into the surgery. Here he underwent much the same examination as a horse does at the hand of a veterinary surgeon. His mouth was looked into, and his eyesight was tested in various ways. He had to trot up and down the room, then hop first on one leg and then on the other, bend forward till his hands touched the ground, draw any number of long breaths, cough repeatedly, and go through a variety of performances of a kindred character, finishing by signing his name. There was something very humiliating in this exhibition, however necessary it might have been, and Hector was heartily glad when it was over. So was the sergeant, who was not sure of his recruit until the surgeon's decision had been pronounced; but

this was a perfectly satisfactory one, and now the sergeant's mind was at rest. His equanimity, however, received a shock when the next man he sent in was rejected, and when the fellow, having dressed leisurely, impudently thanked him for the shilling and the night's lodgings he had given him, and coolly walked off to victimise some other recruiting sergeant. The sergeant collared the fellow ere he got out of reach, and swearing that if he could have no satisfaction out of him for the swindle, he would take care he durst never show his face in Charles Street any more, he lugged him into the Hampshire Hog, where most of the sergeants were enjoying a forenoon glass, and when he had been properly photographed, gave him a kick and a curse and sent him about his business.

Hector had yet to be "sworn in," but as

this ceremony could not be performed legally till forty-eight hours after enlistment, his further presence in Charles Street was not required that day. A sergeant, whose regiment was full, and who had therefore temporarily discontinued recruiting, volunteered to show him some of the sights of London; and they made the orthodox round, commencing with the National Gallery and finishing at the Tower. Hector had had enough of the rendezvous, and the second time of his sojourning in Charles Street, he spent, by the advice of his sergeant, in the house of an elderly lady who was known far and wide by the title of the "Baroness." A motherly old soul was the Baroness, soft-hearted and sympathising, especially when her recruit lodger was a good-looking young fellow. An unrequited attachment to a handsome recruiting sergeant had blighted

her earthly prospects ; for as she would often tell recruits, if it hadn't been that she had loved him so deeply she "couldn't abear to leave the street," she might have married "a many respectable tradesmen;" but her heart was green yet, and she would weep profusely if a recruit imparted to her confidences of a pathetic nature. The Baroness was pretty well to do, having saved some money by boarding and lodging recruits who had a shot in the locker, and were unwilling to consort with the ignoble herd in the rendezvous. Many a cunning old sergeant had cast eyes of affection upon the Baroness, or rather upon her furniture and savings ; but she clung fondly to the memory of the dashing young sergeant who was so cruel, and would have nought of the attentions of her self-interested admirers.

At twelve o'clock next day but one, the

sergeant took Hector down to the Westminster police-court, for the purpose of having the oath of allegiance administered to him. The magistrate was one of those gentlemen who have a fondness for killing a good many dogs with one stone, so he told Hector to wait till a few more attestators should have come forward, and proceeded with the business of the court. Hector thus had an opportunity of witnessing the administration of justice in a metropolitan police-court, and was surprised beyond measure at the rapidity with which the magistrate got through his work. In the course of less than an hour he had committed a burglar for trial, sent a wife-beater to jail for three months, inflicted several five shillings fines for drunkenness and incapability, and remanded a prisoner charged with murder. Then a number of other gentlemen desirous of formally dedicating them-

selves to their Queen and country having arrived, he ordered his clerk to read the oath, and proceeded to swear in the assembled batch of recruits. In doing so he experienced much exertion of spirit from the effusive loyalty of a middle-aged Irish recruit, who insisted on going down on his knees, and having the various provisions of the oath read to him over and over again, so that he might thoroughly digest them; having done which, he responded at intervals, with much fervour and unction, with sundry "Amens," "Yes, s'help me," "By jabers, an' I will," and so forth. These fervent responses were, however, abruptly interrupted by the entrance of a slatternly woman with a child in her arms and one at her apron, who there and then commenced a fierce assault upon the kneeling recruit, blackguarding him at the same time in the

most violent way. When stopped in this little pastime by the usher of the court, she addressed the magistrate in a torrent of language, mingled with tears, and, although somewhat hazily, contrived to convey to him the information that the "blackguard of a fellow" was her husband, and of course, as a married man, not entitled to enlist as a single one. The magistrate made very short work of the detected runaway. As he did not deny the charge, he then and there sentenced him to three months' imprisonment, had the woman turned out of court, and finished the attestation of the other recruits in a gallop.

Hector was then brought back to Charles Street, and taken before the field officer for formal approval. Having passed under the standard, for the purpose of determining his exact height, he stood for his portrait, which

was done in pen and ink by a staff sergeant, and Hector found himself described as “ five feet ten and a half inches tall, blue eyes, auburn hair, fresh complexion ; distinguishing marks, none. The staff-adjutant claimed his attention for a few minutes, while he obtained his autograph in a massive book ; and this done, made him a present of three half-crowns in full of the instalment of his bounty falling due previous to joining his regiment. The field-officer then asked him a few formal questions, gave him a word or two of advice, and then dismissed him as ready to be sent to his depôt, whenever a staff-sergeant should have made up a party.

Till this was formed, he lived meanwhile in the house of the Baroness, parading, for form’s sake, every morning at the “ Hampshire Hog,” just to satisfy his sergeant that he had not deserted. Hector never asked

for any pay, his own funds not yet having been exhausted ; and somehow the sergeant's memory, although a very good one in most matters, was peculiarly weak as regards this particular item. He produced a variety of articles, however, consisting chiefly of whips, chain burnishers, and spurs, which he conscientiously recommended as a desirable investment, and as procurable from him at about half the price they would cost in barracks. Hector bought and paid for them without a murmur, and, greenhorn as he was, felt actually grateful to the sergeant for his considerate kindness ; a further proof of which the latter furnished by representing to Hector that his great-coat and railway-rug were now positively valueless to him, but that nevertheless he did not mind giving him half-a-sovereign for the two, an offer which Hector at once accepted. It never

reached beyond the stage of an offer, however, for although Hector duly handed over the articles, the sergeant happened to be in the throes of a difficulty with regard to changing a five-pound-note, a feat which no doubt he ultimately managed to accomplish, but not until after Hector had been handed over with half-a-dozen other recruits, for the purpose of being conducted to Canterbury, where the depôt of the 30th Light Dragoons was lying. The squad was marched down to the railway station one fine summer afternoon, the passers-by looking on the men who composed it with something of the same sympathising glance as men look at a man who is on his road to jail; and Hector, who was impatient of those pitying looks, was very glad when at last they were out of the station, and fairly on their road for Canterbury.

CHAPTER XIII.

DAVID HOME was in a mood which for him was one of unwonted cheerfulness. The morning's post had brought him two very pleasing communications. One of these was to the effect that his settlement at Fetternoon was looked forward to with much good-will and cordiality by the inhabitants of that parish; the other was a notification from the happy and grateful son of his old parishioner that the patron of Glenfiloch had complied with Mr. Home's recommendation, and presented him to the vacant incumbency of that parish. Mr. Home had walked out early to

congratulate his old elder on the good fortune of his son ; and on his return, instead of immediately re-entering the manse, had strolled into that favourite haunt of his, the mossy old kirkyard, where so many dear to the minister's heart lay under the green sward. He was sitting here " meditating among the tombs," when he was startled out of his reverie by the sound of approaching carriage wheels. Sir Dugald Grant's turn-out was as well known in the district as the veteran himself, and Mr. Home at once recognised it. Sir Dugald's tastes were military, even down to his carriage-horses, and he drove a pair of cast-off cavalry chargers. One of these was a raw-boned old white horse, which had borne the kettledrums of the Scots Greys for a fabulous number of years. Indeed, a tradition prevailed in the neighbourhood that the old charger had

been in Waterloo. The companion of this bony veteran was a rusty old black horse, which had done duty in the ranks of the Household Cavalry ; but years had told on the flowing glories of his mane and tail, as they do upon the once thick tresses of fair ladies who are on the wane ; and when the old black became entitled to the ignominious epithet of “ rat-tailed,” he was inexorably discarded from the aristocratic stable of the Guards. Sir Dugald had picked him up as a pleasing contrast to the old white drum-horse, and had driven the curious pair ever since in his quaint, lumbering, old-fashioned vehicle.

Mr. Home hastened to the gate, eager to greet his daughter, whose return so soon was to him a pleasing surprise. The quiet Glenfloch Manse never looked the same to the old minister when the sunlight of his

daughter's presence was away from it. As he stood waiting eagerly at the gate, he was surprised to notice that the carriage stopped at the fork of the road which led up to the Manse, and that Mary stepped out of it, and walked towards him alone, slowly and hesitatingly, instead of with her usual joyous impetuosity. Why had not Sir Dugald and his lady come up to the Manse for the half-hour's chat which was their wont? Mr. Home's heart misgave him—he feared he knew not what, as he hurried with unequal steps to meet his lingering daughter.

The joyous face was pale with agitation—the beautiful eyes were red and heavy with much weeping. She ran forward when she saw her father, fell upon his neck, and wept sore and silently. Mr. Home could not fathom the cause of her grief, but he saw how deep and real it was, and instead of

eagerly questioning her, tried every endearing art of which he was master to soothe her. At length he succeeded in a measure. The tears yet flowed, indeed, but she overcame the rising hysterical impulse, and putting an arm round her father's neck, she led him through the open wicker-gate of the churchyard up into the corner where her dead mother lay. Then she found her voice, and told her father everything: to what it was that he owed the presentation to Fetternoon, and the imperative necessity which existed for at once retracting the acceptance of that charge.

The red spot of anger which rose into Mr. Home's withered cheek at the recital proved how quick to wrath he was by temperament.

"The villain—the infernal villain!" he exclaimed, "to think that David Home

would buy a church by the sale of his daughter ! By the living God, were it not for my cloth, I would seek him out, and ram his loathsome offer down his white-livered throat !”

Mary trembled to see the tempest of wrath which her narrative had raised in the ordinarily placid bosom of her father. It was now her turn to soothe, although her own feeling was little less acute than his ; and at length the violence of his passion subsided somewhat, although the embers still smouldered luridly.

Father and daughter had the stern future to look resolutely in the face. One thing was imperative and pressing. Lord Nairn must be at once written to, with an indignant declinature of his offer, and a peremptory withdrawal of the acceptance already in his hands. And so good-bye to the brief

dream of happiness and usefulness at Fetternoon. But this was not all. Mr. Home had resigned Glenfiloch. Not only so, but that very morning he had received information that another had been presented to it in his stead. No doubt, on a representation of the facts of the case, the new presentee, who had been chiefly indebted for his success to Mr. Home's recommendation, would withdraw his claims; but how bitter would be the disappointment to him were the cup thus dashed from his lips! Mary was the first to chivalrously protest against her father's title to destroy thus the prospects of another. "It was their own fault," she argued, "that they had heedlessly fallen into the snare spread for them; they had been striving to compass no other end than their own; and now they had discovered the bad cause for Lord Nairn's apparently dis-

interested friendliness, they had no moral right to turn round and say, 'We have been mistaken, we have been disappointed, and now please cancel everything, and let matters be as they were before.' There had been no saving clause in her father's resignation of Glenfiloch, and he had no right to trade on the good-nature and kindly feeling of his young friend. No, they must decline Fetternoon, and not fall back on Glenfiloch."

"And," added the father mournfully, "we are therefore homeless, my child."

CHAPTER XIV.

IT was too self-evident to be denied. In the course of a month father and daughter would be without a place wherein to lay their heads. Mr. Home's mind almost gave way at the prospect. It was not for himself he cared; the term of his existence could not be long, and it mattered but little where he spent the short evening of his days; but when he thought of his child dependent on the bounty of strangers, the reflection was harder than he could bear. But Mary behaved right gallantly in this crisis. She knew action was the only means of rousing

her father from his brooding despondency, and she broke in ruthlessly upon his bitter reverie. Leading him indoors, she placed food and drink before him, and the old man ate and drank under the spell of her stronger will. Then she put paper before him and bade him write to Lord Nairn. The first epistle which Mr. Home wrote was one full of bitter indignation. Mary read it, and quietly put it in the fire; then she told her father to write again to her dictation. The declinature which she dictated was simple and dignified, without a mark of irritation. It ran thus :—

“ MY LORD,

“ Circumstances, of the nature of which you are no doubt perfectly cognisant, having come to my knowledge, making my acceptance of the presentation to Fetternoon discreditable and degrading, I respectfully

inform you that I hereby withdraw the same without the loss of a moment,

“ And I remain, your servant,

“ DAVID HOME.”

This laconic epistle being duly sealed, addressed, and sent to the post-office, Mary proposed, in accordance with a previous arrangement with Lady Grant, that they should walk over to Glenfeshie, and take the advice of the good old soldier and his wife upon the situation of affairs. Her chief anxiety was to keep her father from bitter communing with himself, and she took much the same course with him as a doctor does with a man who has taken an overdose of opium. All the way to Glenfeshie she talked to him incessantly, conjuring up endless possibilities of “something turning up,” which she herself felt were the wildest im-

probabilities. But the good effect was gained. Something, which if not hope was at least better than despondency, was enkindled in the old man's breast, and by the time they stood in Sir Dugald's grey porch, Mr. Home was almost himself again. Sir Dugald received him with a hearty shake of the hand, and gave Mary an approving kiss; for he knew everything, and the old warrior was pleased at the brave face the girl wore. Lady Grant could not refrain from an honest tear or two, but repressed her emotion, and received the two as if they had dropped in for an ordinary call.

After tea Sir Dugald formally introduced the subject which was nearest all their hearts, by asking the question whether Mr. Home had firmly determined not to take any steps whereby he might still retain Glenfiloch. The latter replied with firm-

ness that having resigned Glenfloch, and another having been appointed in his room, he considered himself in honour debarred from attempting to disturb the settlement, and that therefore that matter might be considered as settled. Sir Dugald could not help applauding the feeling, although Lady Grant considered it Quixotic—or, to use her own homely expression, “rather perjink in its nicety;” but as both Mr. Home and Mary were firm, there was clearly no more to be said on this head; so they addressed themselves to the consideration of the future. Both Sir Dugald and his lady pressed Mr. Home urgently to take up his residence with them for the remainder of their days. They loved Mary, they said, like a daughter of their own, and they would be proud and glad if Mr. Home would make his mind up then and there, and “say no more about it.”

David Home's heart swelled as he tried to thank the good couple for their kind offer ; he never would forget it while he lived, but it was out of the question. He had not long to live, he said, and it was an inexpressible gratification to him to know that Mary would have so good a friend as Lady Grant when he was gone ; but so long as he had life and strength he must not eat the bread of idleness, but strive to do what little he could in the field of his own calling. There were City Missions, some of which were always vacant, for nobody kept them when he could get anything better, and Mr. Home had made up his mind to make application for one of these, and to die in harness. As her father spoke, Mary looked admiringly on his reverend face, flushed as it was with emotion ; she was glad he was himself again, and she had the

satisfaction of knowing that she it was who had tided him over the evil hour of despondency by her courageous devotion.

Sir Dugald did not like the plan at all. If Mr. Home, he said, was decided against pitching his tent at Feshiedale, why, there was no more to be said, although Sir Dugald, for his part, "saving the minister's presence," thought it "d——d unfriendly;" but he prophesied that Mr. Home would not survive six months' work as a City Missionary, even if his age did not operate as a bar to his receiving such an appointment at all. No; Sir Dugald had a scheme worth two of that. He had an old friend and fellow-soldier high in office in London, and "by George, he would write to him, and make him ferret out an Army chaplaincy somewhere or other within the four seas for the minister." The pay, Sir Dugald said, was not much, but the

work was not arduous and the position was an honourable one—far better than prowling among the alleys and slums of Edinburgh or Glasgow, and bringing home all sorts of “infernal infection to my bonnie Mary.” The general was a man of action. Without so much as waiting for Mr. Home’s formal consent, he was at his desk in a twinkling, and having whipped out a quire of thick despatch paper, he began his epistle to his old comrade in a handwriting as stiff and upright as a drill-sergeant. It did not take him long to write it, for although not a very quick penman, Sir Dugald developed a commendable brevity in all his communications, whether verbal or written, as if more words than were just sufficient to convey his desires were superfluous. It is a pity there are not more correspondents like Sir Dugald in this respect.

Mr. Home made no objections, and Sir Dugald had the letter on its way to the post-office in a couple of minutes after he had sealed it. An answer was not to be expected in less than a week, and during this time everybody agreed it would be better that there should be no bruiting abroad of the sudden change in Mr. Home's position. Were it known that he was homeless even temporally, the probability was that the young presentee to Glenfiloch would insist on withdrawing his acceptance, at the cost of whatever disappointment to himself; and the Homes above everything desired to avoid this, for they well knew how delighted the young man and the aged elder, his father, were at the former's good prospects.

Before the Homes left Glenfeshie to walk home in the pleasant, cool eventide, Lady Grant told Mary what she had heard

since her arrival at home—that Hector Macdonald had suddenly quitted his father's house, and no one knew whither. The information was far from indifferent to Mary, and she felt that she, if no one else, could give a clue to the reason. Her troubles seemed heavy enough before, but this made the burthen infinitely heavier; and when the poor girl laid her head upon her pillow that night, she could hardly refrain from mentally framing the wish that if it pleased God she might go to her mother in the still watches of the night.

CHAPTER XV.

A WEEK had elapsed since the events narrated in the last chapter, and Sir Dugald and Lady Grant were holding solemn conclave over a letter which the former had just received from his old official friend in London. It was not often that the attached old couple had a variance of opinion on any topic, for while the General tacitly ceded to his wife the abitrament in domestic and minor matters, he maintained, ordinarily unquestioned by his good easy spouse, the full supremacy in any decision involving matters of importance. But on this occasion there evidently existed quite

a serious difference of opinion, and even a little heat. It was the letter referred to which was the cause of this phenomenon. And yet at first sight one would not have supposed that it contained a brand of discord. It ran thus :

“London, —

“MY DEAR GENERAL,—Yours duly received. No chaplaincies at home vacant, or likely to be for God knows how long. Presuming that your friend was not particular, I spoke to our old friend Dunbar, of the ‘Company,’ and you can have a company’s chaplaincy at once. Of course the acceptance of this will involve going out, and Dunbar tells me that the ultimate destination is necessarily uncertain until Calcutta is reached. On hearing from you I will clinch with Dunbar at once. Passage out given by Company.

“Remember me to her ladyship. What a capital glass of grog she gave me the evening after Waterloo.

“Yours in the bonds of fellowship,

“COLIN MACTAVISH, General.”

This laconic epistle was the bone of contention. Sir Dugald thought it incumbent on him to show it to Mr. Home, and let him come to his own conclusion on the offer contained in it. Personally he did not like that offer, and he meant to do everything that in him lay to dissuade the minister from accepting it. But his own application had been written with Mr. Home's sanction, and this letter being the reply thereto, he felt himself merely the instrument, and in honour bound to hand it over to Mr. Home, the principal in the matter. The General's standpoint, in fact, was that he had no choice whatever in the matter.

Lady Grant felt differently. She had formed a tolerably exact estimate of the mental characteristics of the Homes, both father and daughter, and she was convinced in her own mind that no arguments Sir Dugald could use would avail to deter them from accepting the offer made in the letter. The thought was anguish to the affectionate old lady; for she felt that the expatriation of old Mr. Home must be a terrible blow to him—a wrenching asunder of heart-ties which had lost their elasticity with the advent of old age. To allow him to go to India in his old age seemed like sending him into his grave before his time. And as for Mary, the old lady felt as if she could not let her go. She had almost a mother's love for the beautiful girl, and her feeling heart swelled as she thought of her pet leaving everything, save her father, that was dear to

her, and going out among strangers into a strange land. She pictured her forlorn and alone at some up-country station, when she had laid her father's head into his foreign grave, far away from the friends who would fain cherish her, and exposed to the buffetings of the rude world. The tears rose in Lady Grant's eyes, and there was an unwonted tremble in her voice as she besought her husband not to show to the Homes the letter he had received. There was no obligation to do so, she argued. The General had written to his old friend, making a definite request—that request, he had been informed, it was impossible to comply with. This was answer enough for Mr. Home, and the alternative which had been unasked for, given in the reply, she saw no necessity for bringing under his notice at all. Something would be sure to turn up for him at home,

of a nature to spare the compromise of his independence. The Lord would provide for His servant. Lady Grant poured forth all her powers of entreaty, then she tried expostulation, and finally showed strong symptoms of being in an actual passion—a thing almost unprecedented in her quiet, easy-going ladyship.

Neither of the three devices made the slightest impression on the obdurate Sir Dugald. His honour, he held, was involved, and when this was so, he had a habit of putting his foot down on a thing with so much firmness that it was needless to waste time trying to move him. At length, seeing the unwonted excitement of his wife, and conscious that he was becoming heated himself, he broke up the consultation characteristically, by stumping out into the hall and putting on his hat. Then he returned into

the sitting-room, and politely requested to know whether her ladyship intended to accompany him in his walk to Glenfiloch. That worthy woman came dangerously near utterly losing her temper, and refusing indignantly to go on any such errand ; but she fortunately reflected, since the showing of the letter was clearly inevitable, how opportune would be her arguments dissuasive of the acceptance of the offer it contained ; and, although with no very good grace, she went off to put on her bonnet and shawl.

Perhaps that was the most unsocial walk this worthy couple had together. The General was firm, but terribly glum in his firmness ; the lady had lapsed into positive sulkiness, and would speak not a word. She, however, just as they were nearing the Manse of Glenfiloch, made a last appeal to her husband to read the letter himself to

Mr. Home, and to read only the part of it which conveyed the intimation that no vacancies existed ; but Sir Dugald was like a rock, and the lady relapsed into her pet.

Mary saw them coming, and ran to meet them. She marked the unwonted cloud on the lady's usually placid front, and the gravity of the General's salutation ; and she instinctively augured evil tidings. But she could obtain no reply from either to her eager questionings, and was fain to desist when Sir Dugald drily told her that his communication was for her father.

They entered the cheerful sitting-room, the window of which looked out into the garden, and across it to the heather-clad hill. Here sat Mr. Home, trying to write his farewell sermon to his Glenfiloch flock, and, sooth to say, making a very poor job of it. He never knew how dear his people

were to him till he set about saying farewell. Mary had already twice broken him off from his mournful task, and compelled him to come out into the garden with her, where she strove to distract his mind with cheerful conversation ; but she had not been very successful, and so she concluded that it was better to leave him alone, and let him finish his sweetly-painful task. In this he was interrupted by the entrance of the Grants. In reply to his eager question of “ What news ? ” Sir Dugald, without a word, placed in his hands the letter from General Mactavish. The minister’s face fell visibly as he read the first three lines ; but the dejection fled as he read on, and ere he came to the end a flush was on his withered cheek, and a sparkle in his eye. When he had finished, he handed the letter to Mary, asking her to read it also. She did so, and, with a sigh, silently placed it on the table.

“Well?” was the laconic inquiry of Sir Dugald.

“I accept the offer,” replied Mr. Home, hurriedly; “I’m ready now. Let us go at once, Mary.”

Poor Mary knew not what to say. She would fain have urged something to induce her father at least to reflect calmly on the offer—but she saw and sympathised with the keenness of his feeling, although his determination was very painful to her. Like the good daughter she was, she yielded, with the calm words,

“Very well, papa. Where you go, I go; it matters not to me whither, while I am with you.”

Lady Grant and Sir Dugald interposed simultaneously; but the lady, being the more voluble, soon distanced and silenced her more deliberate lord and master. She

expended all the force of argument and entreaty she could summon to her aid. She represented to Mr. Home his age—and that it was akin to deliberate suicide for him to think of going to India at his time of life. She repeated eagerly her offer of a home for life to Mr. Home, and her proposal to adopt Mary as her own daughter; and finally she broke down utterly, and burst into a flood of tears.

Then the General struck in with his heavy battery. His arguments were cogent, and powerfully plied, but they had no effect on Mr. Home. When Sir Dugald had finished, the minister rose, shook him fervently by the hand, and said,

“ Say no more on the subject, dear friend. My mind is made up, there is work for me to do in India, and a Providence I must not disregard has brought about this offer. Let

us write to General Mactavish, and gratefully accept it."

It was clear the minister was immovable ; and so the Grants reluctantly desisted from their well-meant efforts. The General wrote to his friend, and in the course of ten days the whole matter was arranged. The Homes had a fortnight to make their preparations for leaving their native land. So quiet was the matter kept, that there was no rush of fulsomely condoling friends to say farewell ; a few staunch ones Mr. Home and Mary quietly called on themselves and said "good-bye" with deep and true feeling. The new presentee to Glenfiloch relieved them of the trouble and bustle of disposing of the furniture and other effects, through the medium of a public roup, by taking over everything at a valuation—which was a great relief to their minds. They were to leave

for London on the Monday. On the Sabbath Mr. Home preached the farewell sermon, which had cost him so much to write.

Wonderfully he was borne up throughout. Often the voice trembled, and the involuntary tear dropped now and then on the open Bible ; but the old man seemed endowed with a strength that was not his own. The effect on the congregation was very striking. Of a verity, it might be said that within the four grey walls of the primitive little church there was not a dry eye. The venerable elders of the congregation, and the young lads and lasses, mingled their tears. Poor Mary sat in the Manse pew with her face buried in her hands, and the salt tears running through between her slender fingers. At length the simple Presbyterian form of worship drew to a close. David Home stood up to pro-

nounce the concluding benediction, and, to this day, men and women in Glenfiloch speak of the rapt fervour with which, as the congregation stood hushed and awe-stricken, he implored a blessing upon it and every human being in the parish. Spellbound, his hearers stood for several minutes after he had concluded and had sitten down in the pulpit; then, “with lingering steps and slow,” they moved out into the churchyard, till at length Mary and the minister were the only two left within the church. The latter came down the pulpit steps, took his weeping daughter’s hand in his own, and led her out. Before their eyes, in a long double file lining the path, stood the congregation : the children nearest the church, then the young men and women, next to them the heads of families, and last of all the white-haired,

time-stricken elders, some of whom remembered the first sermon Mr. Home preached in Glenfiloch. It took Mary and her father some time before they got to the church-yard gate; for they had to shake hands with every soul in that double row. Many a blessing was invoked on that fair young head, drooping on the breast like a lily, as the weeping girl said farewell to those who had known and honoured her mother, and who loved and respected herself. At length they were at the gate, and there remained only to say adieu to the venerable ruling elder of the parish who stood by it. As Mr. Home and his daughter reached him, he made a step forward to meet them, and pulled the bonnet from off his thin, snow-white locks. The whole assembly uncovered, and then the patriarch, raising his right arm aloft, lifted up his voice and prayed,

and said—"The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob—yea, the God of your fathers, and of thy dead wife, David Home, and of thy dead mother, Mary Home, be with you and protect you for ever and ever, Amen!" The deep-toned "Amen" from the responsive congregation went aloft into the summer sky, as father and daughter reverentially bowed their heads, and then passed onward into the house which so soon was to cease to be a home to them.

On the morrow they paid their last visit to the "minister's neuk" in the churchyard, and they left Glenfiloch. Sir Dugald and Lady Grant conveyed them to the point at which they met the coach, and there left them, with most fervent good wishes. And so farewell to the quiet strath and the heather hills. Shall we, in following up the fortunes of these two exiles, ever see them

more ; or is the last, long, mournful gaze they cast behind them to close our acquaintance with Glenfiloch ?

CHAPTER XVI.

WE left Hector on his way to Canterbury, under the care of a staff-sergeant. The squad of recruits reached Canterbury in the evening, and were immediately marched into barracks, and submitted to the preliminary inspection of the sergeants of the dépôt assembled in the mess-room. These experienced worthies surveyed the lot critically, and pronounced it to be, with the exception of Hector, a "thundering bad one," expressing their opinion freely that the breed of soldiers was dying out, and that the service was going to the dogs with all convenient speed. This is a cardinal

article of belief with every man who has been in the army over ten years. No such men join now-a-days as in the times when he took the shilling, when every man was of the maximum standard in height, and the regiment "was a king to what it is now." As these croaking prognostications never come to pass, and the British Army still contrives to keep up a respectable appearance and strength, it is fair to conclude that the contrast, so vigorously drawn by old soldiers between "now" and "then," is not worthy of much reliance, seeing that probably it is distance which lends enchantment to the view.

This unofficial inspection being over, the recruits were taken into the kitchen of the sergeants' mess, where the cook had provided for them a good supper, for which those who had funds paid on the spot, and

the impecunious gentlemen found themselves debited with the cost when they came to sign their first month's accounts. One or two of the younger and less dignified sergeants came out into the kitchen after supper was over, and were not above dipping their moustaches into the beer which those of the recruits who had any money left received a pretty broad hint that they were expected to "stand." One of these sergeants, perhaps from a casual glance at the contents of Hector's purse, suddenly conceived a violent esteem and regard for him. This he manifested first by sitting down beside him, and entering into conversation with him in the most condescending and free manner ; and finally he volunteered, as there was still a couple of hours to spare before watch-setting, to show Hector some of the sights of Canterbury, if he cared for

a stroll. Hector assented eagerly, for he was anxious to know something of the ways of barrack life, and thought the affable sergeant would be as suitable an instructor as he could have. So they sallied forth, the sergeant swaggering along in the most dashing way, and making a point of looking over his shoulder at every woman they passed—these two practices being, as he informed Hector, almost the first thing he must learn before he could claim the shadow of a title to be reckoned a smart dragoon. This piece of information was rather puzzling to Hector, who could not for the life of him see the connection subsisting between looking over his shoulder at girls and being what he wished to be, a smart soldier; but, trusting that time would throw some light on the subject, he did not call upon the sergeant for an explanation. That gentle-

man pursued his system of tuition further by chucking the barmaid under the chin when they had entered a public-house, then requesting to know whether she was prepared to marry him in the morning, and, having received a discouraging response to this question, pleading for some consolation in the shape of a lock of her hair. Being of a versatile disposition, he then turned his attention to an endeavour to enlist a young fellow in a slop who was drinking in the same compartment, and appeared to be on the high road to success, when the bumpkin, after he had drunk a few glasses at the sergeant's expense (or rather at Hector's, for the sergeant had forgotten to bring his purse with him), grinningly held up one of his hands, which was minus a finger, and wished the sergeant good night. By this time it was nearly ten o'clock, so the ser-

geant and Hector had to return to barracks. On the road, the sergeant, with a touching fervour, swore eternal friendship for Hector, and promised that he would do everything to assist him he possibly could ; after which he borrowed half-a-sovereign from him, and offered to purchase his suit of civilian clothes, which, he said, Hector, by the rules of the service, was bound to make away with.

Having re-entered barracks, Hector was handed over to an old soldier, who had orders to find him a bed. This was more easily said than done. The depot was very full, and several men, who were without beds at all, were sleeping "all round," as it is called ; that is to say, in those beds which were casually "spare" by reason of their occupants being on guard. Thus there were really more men than beds, and Hector's chance seemed a poor one. However,

his conductor heard of a man being "absent," and of course he would not want his bed even if he should come in, since the guardroom was his doom. So he took Hector up a stone staircase, into a long attic above a range of stables, and having found the vacant bed, told him to make it down for himself, and then left him.

Hector, this night at least, had no occasion to make his bed for himself. A dozen willing hands undertook the task. He had certainly fallen among a good set of fellows. They called him "chum;" they asked him what he thought of the service; they proffered him assistance in a great variety of shapes. At length a remarkable unanimity of sentiment on one particular head developed itself among them.

"I say, Bill, I'm devilish dry!"

"By George, so am I! I believe it's that

——— soger I had for supper. I could drink the sea dry," was Bill's reply. (N.B.— There never was the fount of type made that could supply a sufficiency of ——s for a conversation of any length among soldiers. These indications of expletives will therefore for the future be omitted, it being left to the reader's imagination to supply them : with this guide, that he cannot err if he take an average of one to every three words.)

"What do you say, chaps, to some beer? I can get a canful at the sergeant's mess. It's not shut up yet. I'll be the price of a pot."

"I've got twopence."

"And me threehalfpence."

"Oh, it ain't worth goin' out for a drop like that. The can will hold five gallons. Has nobody else got any browns?"

“Ach, by the powers, now,” said Mick Sullivan, “what are ye rickoning yer lousy coppers for at all, at all? Sure, here’s a young gintleman—I know he’s a gintleman by the face of ’um—will trate us all round, an’ pay his futtin’ like a thrump! By jabers, an’ it would be mighty quare if he wasn’t agreeable for us to drink the speedy promotion to him that he is sure of!”

Mick looked full at Hector as he spoke, who had some difficulty in understanding his atrocious brogue, but he managed to take in the general scope of the situation. So he threw down a crown-piece, upon which Mick complimented him highly on his liberality, swearing he was “a broth av a boy entoirely,” and that as he had no “chum” he adopted Hector in that capacity henceforth from that moment.

The beer was fetched duly in the big

tin pail, and handed round the room in stoneware basins. While his comrades were intent on its consumption, Hector had an opportunity of studying both the place in which he found himself and its occupants. The room was of immense length, and was lined all down both sides with narrow iron cots, placed so close to each other that there was hardly room to pass between. The centre was occupied by a range of tables, with forms at either side, and at about the height of a man a shelf ran round the walls, upon which were stowed the kits and saddlebags of the men. The roof, which was very low, showed the rough naked rafters and huge coupling beams, with the great cobwebs, which almost seemed a part of their framework. A huge grate was at each end of the room, flanked by a coal-box, which looked like a sarcophagus.

The inmates of this cheerful abode were chiefly young men who had lately joined the *depôt*, and were undergoing preliminary drill, previous to being sent to their regiments on foreign service. There were, too, a few old soldiers, some whose time was nearly up, and others who had been transferred from other corps. Hector did not much like the looks of his future comrades. There were, it is true, a fair proportion of good-looking young fellows among them, but there were also many who unmistakeably bore the stamp of the brute. With few exceptions they never opened their mouths without, as a matter of course, swearing the most hideous and causeless oaths, and obscene language was the rule, not the exception. A good many appeared to Hector's uninitiated eyes to be recovering from fever; for their hair was so short as to suggest the idea

that their heads had been shaved very recently. Every one was in his shirt-sleeves, and these sleeves were universally worn tucked high up to the shoulder, exposing the bare arm. Some wore seedy blue trousers, which they called overalls, others dingy white ones, and a good many who had risen from their beds at the magic word "beer," wore nothing of the kind at all.

By-and-by Hector heard a trumpet sound in the yard, and the blast of it seemed to put out all the lights simultaneously. The bed he had chanced upon was next to that of Mick Sullivan, who, although a blunt, out-spoken Patlander, really seemed about the best fellow of the whole crew. When the lights went out, he forsook the beer, and came up to Hector, who was sitting on his bed somewhat disconsolately. Mick had a basin of beer in his hand.

“Here,” said he, “drink, chum ! Come, hwhat’s the use of being downhearted, at all, at all? Sure an’ life’s short enough, without spindin’ any av it in frettin. The best thing you can do now is to go asy to bed, an’ bedad ye’ll be a new man whin ye rise in the marning. Put yer breeches undher yer head, avic, for the tundherin’ rogues here would stale the eyes out av the Blessed Vargin’s face. Come, turn in, an’ thin finish the swipes.”

Hector took honest Mick’s advice and got between the sheets, which he found so rough as to make him think that he only wanted a handful of ashes to be able to realize the full beatitude of the scriptural costume of “sackcloth and ashes.” Both pallet and pillow were unpleasantly hard ; but Hector was sleepy, and he was in a sound slumber long before Mick and the rest of

the company had exhausted the beer-can.

Next morning the blare of the trumpet sounding the *reveillé* awoke him. He sat up in bed, with a foul taste in his mouth, and the fetid atmosphere from the many breaths almost made him sick. His "breeches," as Mick called them, were all right; but when he came to look for his coat, he found it and his cap both gone. He had hung them at night on the corner of the cot. By this time Mick was stretching and yawning in the next bed, and to him Hector communicated his loss. Mick sputtered most vehemently between his wrath and the fur in his mouth, and, dressing hastily, went to the door, which he locked and put the key in his pocket. Then he walked up the room to the far corner, where a corporal had his bed, and him he told of the "tundherin' shame," that a recruit should lose his coat

the first night he slept in barracks. The corporal was on the alert at once. He stepped out into the centre of the room, announced the fact of the loss, ordered a search, and swore that if he found the missing garment in the possession of any man, he would confine him for theft at once. Everybody set about searching with much assiduity, and at length one of the short-haired gentlemen pulled the coat and cap from behind the coal-box, where he said he found them "quite promiscuous." Of course there was no proof of anything else, and therefore the corporal could take no steps in the matter. But Mick Sullivan took it up, although the non-commissioned officer could not; and, in great indignation, he walked up to the individual with the short hair, and calling him by the opprobrious epithet of a "tundherin' blackguard," let him have a

straight one on the eye, which temporarily interfered with his visual prospects. The short-haired man might have been a thief, no doubt; probably he was ; but he did not relish this style of treatment at all, and having a tolerable knowledge of the art of self-defence, as the result of an early career passed in White-chapel, he returned with interest the compliment which Mick had just paid him. In another minute beds were turned up, tables were cleared to one side, and the two went at it in a lively and scientific style. The Cockney was "a good man," but honest Mick was a better, and the former was rapidly finding his way into a place where he had often been before—Queer-Street, when the stable trumpet sounded, and the combat had to be broken off.

Hector, although not compelled, went to stables like the rest, and, in the course of

the morning, experienced some polite attentions from the teeth of the old horse he undertook to groom, indicative of that quadruped's rooted dislike to persons in civilian costume. After stables were over he went up into the attic again, where his friend Mick initiated him into the mysteries of making up his bed regimentally. Soon it was breakfast time, and although Hector felt some surprise at seeing neither tablecloth nor cups and saucers, he contrived, with the help of some butter which Mick fetched from the canteen, to make a very tolerable breakfast off his pound of bread and basin of coffee. Soon after, he was summoned to go to hospital for the purpose of being inspected by the surgeon of the dépôt. Having already passed the staff-surgeon in Charles Street, this was a mere matter of form, and very soon over. At

eleven o'clock he was taken to the orderly room, where he came before the commanding officer of the dépôt. That high dignitary put some questions to him on the subject of his former occupation, and when Hector replied that he was the son of a Scottish gentleman, the great man muttered something which sounded uncommonly like "d—d lie." However, he was gracious enough to inform him that if he turned out a good, smart, clean soldier, he would be sure to meet with favourable notice—told him to keep sober, for he always punished drunkenness severely—by George, he did—* hoped there was none of the "infernal lawyer" about him, and finally ordered the sergeant-major to take him to the tailor's shop and have him measured for his undress uniform at once. This interesting ceremony having been duly consummated,

Hector found himself at liberty to investigate for himself some of the mysteries of barrack-life. Returning to the barrack-room, which was now nearly empty, its occupants being engaged at drill or riding-school, he found a woman on her knees, assiduously scrubbing, while one brat was squatting on a bedrug, and another, leaning over the edge of a tub of dirty water, seemed bent on committing suicide in its muddy depths. His romantic ideas concerning "the soldier's bride" suffered a cruel shock when this dishevelled dame informed him that she was the wife of the corporal of the room, and conveyed a broad hint that he would find it of service to himself if he would assist her in her scrubbing duties. Hector was a gentleman, although a recruit, and it was with a civility which quite captivated the lady, that he grasped the scrub-

bing-brush and made his first essay in this line on a table. She became quite interested in our young hero, and being a true woman, although the circumstances of her lot had made her a rather rough one, she kindly imparted to him not a few hints regarding the career on which he had embarked, which he afterwards found both very true and very useful. When the floor, table, and forms had been duly scrubbed, the hearth-stone whitened, and the coal-box black-leaded, the corporal's wife finished off by slapping "that dratted kid" which was meditating suicide; and then sitting down on the bed-iron, while she administered nutriment from nature's fount to her youngest hope, she entered on a full narrative of her own early life, from which it appeared, *inter alia*, as the lawyers say, that she was an innkeeper's daughter, whom the dash-

ing corporal had smitten when he was on the line of march. These interesting reminiscences were interrupted by the entrance of two other married women, who had finished their respective rooms—Mrs. Malony, a full-blooded Irishwoman, terribly ignorant and intensely warm-hearted—and Mrs. M'Gregor, a canny dame from Hector's own side of the Tweed. These ladies finding Hector, whom they instinctively recognised as a recruit, on tolerably good terms with the corporal's wife, and casually hearing the chink of money in his pocket, immediately began to manifest an amazing solicitude for that nursing mother's bodily welfare, suggesting that she ought to keep her strength up by the consumption of frequent stimulants. This gentle hint not being understood, Mrs. Malony remarked, in an abstracted sort of way, that "bedad, she cud drink a

dhrap herself," and looked so preternaturally hard at Hector as she did so, that her meaning at length became apparent unto him. Whereupon he gallantly offered to treat the three ladies, an offer which they most graciously accepted, and Mrs. M'Gregor was gone and back again in five minutes with a flat bottle containing a certain modicum of whisky. This was duly done honour to, with the best wishes for Hector's success and speedy promotion.

The three women then went off to the married quarters, and Hector was left alone and idle. But he was not idle long. A corporal on the hunt for fatigue-men looked into the room, and noticing him, set him at once to the task of washing down the stone steps leading up into the attic. He had just finished the job when an affable young man came up to him, and asked

whether he had not joined yesterday. Hector replied in the affirmative, on which his new friend informed him that he was the bearer of a special message to him from the armourer-sergeant, that he should come at once to be measured for his shako. Hector had once been measured for a hat, and he thought that nothing was more likely than that he ought now, as a matter of course, to be measured for a more warlike head-dress; so he at once declared his readiness to go, on the road to the armourer's shop being pointed out to him. The emissary showed him the way without more ado, and Hector presented himself at the armourer's bench, coolly remarking that he had come to be measured for his shako. The black-bearded armourer burst into a fit of laughter, at which Hector was much amazed, for he failed entirely to see the

point of the joke. After a long guffaw, however, the armourer gradually regained his composure, and then, with a gravity which formed a contrast to his former hilarity, he told Hector that he had just received an order which prohibited him from making any more shakoes, a branch of the business now taken over by the farrier-major. To that official he was to go, and when talking to him at any rate he was to ask him for the "dung-money" which was the perquisite of all recruits. Hector did not quite understand all this palaver, and determined to do nothing more in the matter till he saw his friend Mick. He could not understand how it was that when he did see him, and told him the whole story, he too should, like the armourer, burst into a roar of laughter which lasted till he was out of breath. When he had caught his wind again, Mick told him the secret.

“Bedad, and ye’ve been hoaxed beautiful, me boy! An’ that black devil of an armourer to keep the ball a-rowlin’. Sure it’s yourself will be hoaxin’ somebody else the same way by-and-by. So niver say die, but come dacent and quiet up to the canteen, and we’ll wash the cobwebs out of our throats. By the powers, if you don’t dhrink at laste half a pint a day, ye’re flyin’ in the teeth of the Mutiny Act, an’ liable to be shot widout benefit of clargy. What the devil does the Queen give ye beer-money for, if you doun’t spent it in that same?”

Mick was true to his creed. He never did drink more than half a pint at a time; but then he was not very particular how often the times occurred. However, he was a capital “chum” for a recruit, being an excellent soldier himself, and sparing neither trouble, time, nor objurgations till he

had put his pupil into a fair way of being the same. He had a rude sense of principle of his own, had Mick. Of course while the bounty lasted, he was willing enough to help at the sweating of it ; but then he was not like a good many, who take a recruit up as a chum for the sake of sharing in the bounty, and, when it is quite done, take occasion very soon to terminate the connection. Mick was as faithful as a dog, and would stick to his chum as tightly when he was on a penny a day as during the hey-day of the bounty-spending.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN the course of a few days the novelty of Hector's changed position had somewhat worn off. He had got his kit, uniform, belts, and arms, and had commenced his course of foot drill. The illusion regarding the life of a soldier which had possessed him was ere now effectually dispelled. He had pictured it as a scene where gallant men constantly talked of gallant deeds, practised their war-steeds to dexterous arts of the *ménage*, and perfected themselves assiduously in feats of strength and skill in the use of their weapons. He found the reality to consist mainly of grooming and

cleaning accoutrements, with occasional alteratives in the shape of the goose-step, of the roughest horse-play, and the most abominable language spoken habitually by his comrades of the barrack-rooms ; of drink and low debauchery when funds were forthcoming ; and of grumbling, compulsory abstinence from any sort of enjoyment when they were low. But although Hector's disappointment was great, his spirit was not broken. He had entered the army with a purpose. Dim and distant did his goal now appear to him ; but now and then flashes of encouragement broke in upon him. He heard the old soldiers of the *depôt* talk of a young fellow who had not yet been six years in the regiment, which he had entered as a private soldier, but now he was a lieutenant. Hector gazed upon the riding-master of the *depôt* as on a hero—for he was not yet thirty, and

he had risen from the ranks. Instances like these lightened the burden of the great change to our young soldier; what others had done, could he not do as well? And he longed with a great longing to be with his regiment; and then for war, and the opportunity of distinguishing himself. But in the meantime he was not even at the foot of the ladder—for till he was dismissed his drill he was not entitled to rank even as a “full private.”

Hector had joined the dépôt a fortnight ere the riding-school class was formed in which he was included. At length, one morning he had orders to make his *debût* in that arena. This gave him great pleasure, for besides his general eagerness to be getting on, he rather prided himself on his horsemanship, and looked forward to distinguishing himself considerably among the

tan. Perhaps, in the way of horseflesh, there does not exist anywhere a more extraordinary collection than the stud of a cavalry dépôt. Circus horses are nowhere compared with dépôt horses. A dépôt horse has never been known to speak, that we are aware of, but instances are on record of a sagacity and wiliness on their part, which leads one to imagine that they have nothing to do but try to succeed. Their sagacity generally assumes a demoniacal form. They thoroughly comprehend the idiosyncrasies of recruits, and take advantage of their weakness and inexperience with marvellous cunning. As a rule, a recruit stands in awe of his horse for at least three months after he has joined. Dépôt horses are always old, stiff, and rough—ye gods, how rough !

The particular quadruped which was assigned to Hector was a blaze-faced old chest-

nut mare, with a ewe neck, faint vestiges of a tail, and a pair of long white stockings on her hind legs. She had been all through the Crimean War, and a tradition existed anent her, to the effect that in the hard winter before Sevastopol she had been frozen quite hard, and had never afterwards been thoroughly thawed; a circumstance which was held satisfactorily to account for her extraordinary roughness, which was exceptional even in a *depôt* horse. She was universally known by the *sobriquet* of the "Bonesetter"—an appellation which must originally have been conferred upon her by a recruit of a bitterly sarcastic turn of mind, since, had strict veracity been adhered to in the nomenclature, "Dislocator" would have been a far more appropriate word. Indeed, a story was told of her that she had once jerked a hapless recruit's teeth out of his

head, but it never was traced to any authentic basis, and may be set down as the device of a calumniator writhing possibly under an excoriated epidermis. Be this as it may, she was rough enough in all conscience, and was besides gifted with a peculiar roll in her gait, which may be described as something between a wobble and a paralytic stagger. This was the pleasing animal upon which Hector made his first essay in the riding-school; but that sanguine young man's mind was quite at ease, since he nourished the proud belief that the horse was never foaled on whose outside he could not stick.

This conviction was very soon put to the test. The "ride" of twelve raw recruits filed into the school, and, being drawn up in orthodox fashion, the word "Mount" was given. Now, in a general way, there is not much difficulty, with the help of the

stirrup, in getting on a horse's back. But take the stirrup away, and let your horse have a pleasing habit of slewing half round just as you are making your spring, simultaneously making an effort to obtain a mouthful of overall and any underlying flesh which may happen to be anywise protuberant, and it cannot be denied that the difficulties are materially enhanced. Still an active man can overcome them, and Hector was in the saddle, thanks to old equestrian experience, the first of all the twelve. A rough-rider then made herculean endeavours to dislocate his leg joints miscellaneously, with the professed intention of placing them in the proper position ; and having twisted his wrists into the most helpless attitude, surveyed him as a whole, hit him in the small of the back, and then in the stomach, and left him. The like kindly offices having

been performed toward the remaining eleven, the command "Walk" was given, and the leading horse solemnly stalked on round the school, the others following it of their own accord in the same monumental, straight-legged fashion.

This performance, which lasted for a quarter of an hour, Hector thought uncommonly slow. He had fancied that the squad of which he formed a member, would have been brought out one by one, and the capacities of each tested and criticised singly. Instead of this, here he was, his distinctive existence wholly negated, his body uncomfortably distorted into a position he fancied the reverse of graceful, and finding in the command to look at the back of the man in front, not the ghost of an opportunity of gaining any *kudos*. But he soon found something else to do to distract his

mind from bootless repinings. The grim old rough-riding sergeant sung out the word "Trot," and, obedient to the command, the old horses accelerated their pace. Hector very soon found that his previous equestrian experience stood him in very little stead now. In a saddle with stirrups, or even barebacked, he was quite at home; but this was entirely another thing. He was in a saddle, it is true; but it was smooth, round, and so slippery that Hector began to think it must have been greased specially for his discomfiture, and the stirrups were carefully put out of reach across his horse's neck. Then his knees, with which he had flattered himself he could take so strong a grip, had been carefully dislocated beforehand, and turned at least half round; while the old mare yawed, and slewed, and rolled about in an embarrassing and unexpected manner,

which was not to be accounted for on any known system of the theory of motion. Hector very soon found himself in that curious position described by a recruit with a turn for allegory, as being "all over the shop;" now he was all but off on the near side—anon, he only saved himself on the off side by an opportune touch of the boarding of the school, and at the corners especially he had immense difficulty in preventing himself from giving a graphic illustration of centrifugal motion. But he managed to keep a position, although a somewhat peculiar one, somewhere on the outside of the "Bonesetter," and in so doing he was more fortunate than the great majority of his fellows, who, after rolling about in the saddle like so many porpoises on the top of a wave, rolled off altogether, sometimes singly, sometimes in twos and threes at a

time. Whenever a man was "down," the sergeant would shout out his harsh "halt!"; a command which the old horses obeyed with an alacrity so sudden that a rider, unprepared for the convulsive cessation of motion, was sure to pursue his onward course on his own account over his horse's ears. These falls never hurt anybody, for the school was laid deep in tan, and the horses displayed a wonderful humanity in avoiding to tread upon any of the prostrate heroes; but they appeared to exercise a malign influence on the temper of the fiery-nosed, old, rough sergeant, who swore at every tumble with the profusest unction. At length he halted the ride, and having made a short and far from complimentary speech, of which "d——d tailors, barbers' clerks, fat-headed, humped-backed clowns," and other

picturesque appellatives formed the staple, he selected Hector, as the only one who had not yet bit the tan, as the "leading file," and expressing the savage determination to give the lot a "good bucketing," started the ride afresh. Hector was very proud, but by no means comfortable. There was nothing now in front of the "Bone-setter" to regulate her pace, and her vagaries Hector found very embarrassing. Now she made a quick run half-way up the side of the school, and Hector at every step she took went up without any very definite idea as to whether he should come down in the tan or on her back; then she suddenly slackened her pace, and clubbed the whole ride in a cluster on top of her. But worse than this was coming. The sergeant made a stride into one corner of the school, and every horse in the ride pricked up his ears.

The cunning brutes knew what was coming, although the hapless wretches on their backs were yet in blissful ignorance. Suddenly a "crack" ran through the building. The fiend of a sergeant was brandishing a long whip, with a thong like a fishing-line. This terrible weapon galvanized the old horses. The "Bonesetter," the moment she experienced its first salutation, put her head down, set her rump up, and bolted up the school as if a menagerie had been turned loose on her track. The sergeant roared to Hector to stop her, but his energies were engrossed in attempting to stop *on* her, especially as she diversified her gallop by sundry wild kicks at the imaginary wolves behind her, which converted her back into an incline, the gradient of which Hector found so steep that he longed for a backward clutch at her tail to keep him from

going over her head. At length a rough-rider caught her, but not till the very moment when Hector had come to the conclusion that it was useless to try sticking on any longer, and that, therefore, he might as well roll off comfortably at once. This finished the lesson for the day, and the ride was dismissed amidst a volley of disparaging observations by the rough-riding fraternity, tending greatly to the disturbance of the self-respect of the recruits, who, by the way, experienced a sensation during the remainder of the day as if their limbs were not under their control, and they would decidedly have considered Nature more kind to them if she had made them more pachydermatous.

This, however, was the first essay, and very soon Hector found that indispensable to the dragoon—his “seat”—and began

to take a liking and pride in the exercises of the riding-school. He had not been long in attendance when the riding-master advanced him into a higher class, and although such expressions of opinion as positive commendation are very rare in the riding-school, the fact that he was seldom or never abused or sworn at satisfied Hector very well, when he contrasted his own immunity with the torrent of vituperation which he heard poured forth on others. There was one miserable wretch in particular for whom Hector's heart was sore. The man had occupied a respectable position prior to his enlistment. He was far too old to do any good in the service, and it could only have been madness which prompted him to enlist. However, here he was, and he used to mope and sigh about the barracks all day, weeping in sequestered corners for

his wife and children, and to all the chaff which was heaped upon him returning only a mild, sheepish stare through a pair of spectacles, that ought to have disarmed his tormentors. This miserable man never could do anything right. At foot-drill he was always going left-about instead of right-about, and had a chronic tendency to tumble over his own feet. But the riding-school was the grand scene of his torture. He could no more ride than he could fly. There was no elasticity in his frame, and his abortive attempts to mount had always to be aided by a helping hand from a rough-rider. At a walk he managed to keep his position, but the moment "Trot" was sounded he gave himself up for lost, and lifted up his voice and wept aloud. Three horses' lengths at the trot was about his allowance, and then he calmly rolled off

on to the tan, on which he would sit piteously, making pathetic appeals to the riding-master not to force him to remount. Through sheer persistency in rolling off he at last conquered, although the battle was a prolonged one. He was strapped on to the saddle, but the moment the straps were off he sought his favourite haven, the tan ; and at length, in desperate vexation of spirit, the riding-master swore one day that if he came again to the riding-school, he would have him buried under the tan. Under the influence of this dire threat he deserted the same night, and was never heard of more.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BEFORE Hector had been two months at the dépôt he had quite lost the characteristics of a raw recruit, and had begun to look forward to the important event of his dismissal from foot-drill. At the outset of his career he had experienced a good deal of annoyance from the professional practical jokers who take delight in playing upon the ignorance of barrack ways on the part of recruits. Hector was by no means a quarrelsome young fellow, and he was willing to take in good part a fair share of what he considered was part of the system of initiation into the mysteries of soldiering;

but it galled him not a little when he found that recruits who had only been joined a few months, and were really nearly as "green" as himself, were his chief baiters. His staunch friend Mick Sullivan was his resort for advice in the circumstances. Mick was a philosopher in a small way, although had you told him so it would have puzzled him to know your meaning.

"Arrah, now, me son," was his counsel to Hector, "ye mustn't be goin' for to be too touchy about throifles. A recruit is for all the world like a young bear; be my soul, all his throubles are fornint him, an' it's not a haporth av use for him to be fallin' out with a fair whack av thim. So, Heckthor me lad, moy advice to ye is to grin and bear thim, till ye think ye have had yer allowance, and afther that, bedad, the first chap that thries to put the hoax on yez, just quietly

up with yer fist, and lit him have a straight one on the nose."

Hector was quite of opinion that, in Mick's phraseology, he had had his allowance already. So the very same evening, when an intensely clever young fellow approached him with a message from the Quartermaster's Assistant, to the effect that he should go to the stores and be measured for the thumbs for his gauntlets, Hector quietly laid aside the sword-scabbard he was cleaning, and sent his fist with considerable impetus into the face of the bearer of the pretended message. That ingenious youth was considerably surprised, but collected his faculties sufficiently to request an adjournment to the riding-school, the Chalk Farm of cavalry regiments. Hector was nothing loth, and after about fifteen minutes of a pugilistic encounter, the exuberance of chaff was pretty

well taken out of the merry joker, and he announced his firm conviction that he had "had enough." After this Hector experienced no more of the attentions of the fraternity of practical jokers.

Mick was an invaluable comrade. He was a private soldier, had never been anything else, and never hoped to be, for his want of scholarship was an insuperable bar to his promotion. But he had a keen native wit, and a good deal of experience, which he imparted to Hector willingly, for he saw that there was stuff in the lad, and that he would rise. Mick had served through the Crimean War, and was in hospital when the 30th left the country. It was probable that he and Hector would go out to India in the same draft. The two comrades were wont to go out of barracks, after evening stables were done, to a quiet little public-house, which

Mick knew well, and there, over a horn of ale, he would impart to Hector many a hint for his future guidance.

“I need not tell ye, me son, to be a clane souldier,” Mick would say. “Bedad, an’ it’s meself will make ye one, or else I’ll break yer nick. Onst get the credit for bein’ a clane man, an’ it’s devil a sargint or sargint-major will iver throuble ye at all, at all. But ye must be a quiet man, too. If ye onst get the name of bein’ a lawyer, an’ havin’ a cheeky answer to iverything a non-com. may say to ye, bedad, it’s my own private belafe that ye might as well take a big shtone an’ tie it round yer nick, an’ jump into the deepest wather ye can convaniently find. If ye onst get the caracther for bein’ saucy, ye’ll be a marked man, from the colonel to the carpral. But, on the tother hand, me boy, it won’t do at all, at all for

ye to be a crawler. There's niver a man worse liked in the sarvice than a lick-spittle ; an' although ye may get a chance now an' again by creepin' an' snakin', be jabers, it's mesilf can assure ye it will do ye niver a bit of good in the long run. No, Heckthor, ma bouchal, be independant, and kape yersilf to yersilf. Do yer work like a man. Kape a civil tongue in yer head. Niver take an insult from the face of clay, an' niver ate dirt fornint any man, and, bedad, a smart young fellow like you will go up the ladher like ould boots."

This was about the sum of honest Mick's advice, and it cannot be denied the credit of being at least manly and straightforward. Poor Mick was a better counsellor than a practitioner. He "bruk out," as he called it himself, sometimes, and then he was sure to finish in the guard-room ; but he always

watched over Hector as a hen would over her solitary chick. When he had made up his mind to remain absent for a night, as he sometimes would, when the temptation in the shape of plenty of drink was strong, he would punctiliously escort Hector to the very barrack-gate, and having seen him safe inside, would contentedly walk off on his own erratic course. Of course Mick got into trouble,— nay, on one occasion he committed himself so far as to lose his cherished hair at the hands of the provost-sergeant in charge of the depôt cells; but nothing seemed to disturb materially his happy-go-lucky temperament.

Hector, however, although he liked Mick very well as a chum, and was heartily grateful to him for his solicitude for his welfare, could scarcely be expected to find in him very congenial companionship. Indeed, it

was with regard to this point that he felt most keenly the change from his former sphere. Here and there in the dépôt there were recruits, indeed, who had received good educations, and probably, prior to their enlistment, occupied a good position in the social world—but as a general rule Hector found these young fellows the worst blackguards of the whole crew. They seemed to glory in sinking to the lowest depths of degradation, and nothing pleased them more than to make a jest and mockery of those relations for which even the most abandoned generally entertain a sacred feeling. Mocking allusions to mothers and sisters were nowise uncommon on their lips, and their loathsomeness sometimes called forth indignant reproof even from some ignorant clown, who yet had some of the feeling of humanity in him. In default of

finding congenial companionship in the barrack-room, Hector sought for compensation in the library which was attached to the dépôt, where he spent many a pleasant hour when his work was done for the night.

CHAPTER XIX.

H ECTOR had joined the depôt between three and four months, when a curious change came over his friend Mick. That worthy fellow took to going out of evenings by himself, and quite discouraged Hector whenever he manifested any inclination to accompany him. This continued for more than a month ; and at length Hector, being unable to penetrate the mystery, and thinking that perhaps Mick was anxious to break up the confederacy, requested an explanation of a line of conduct he could not but think very unsocial.

“ Arrah now, Heckthor, me flower, you’re

just a silly spalpeen av blazes to think o' the kind at all, at all," was Mick's indignant reply. "Sure if it hadn't been a grate saycret, it's yourself would have knowd all about it long ago. I've been coortin', ye devil. Troth an' she is one of the purtiest craytures that ever you clapt your two eyes upon, an' a prudent girl, too! So that's the saycret, now, Heckthor, my boy. So come on up to the canteen, and sure we'll dhrink luck an' joy to the wooin'."

Over their pint of beer, Mick told his chum all the story. His inamorata, it appeared, was the daughter of the proprietor of a small beer-house in the outskirts of the town, and a very respectable young woman. As for the matter of love, as Mick said, "Shure, she's over head and ears wid me beautiful silf, and troth, I kud kiss the very sod the soles of her darlint feet have trodden

on." Thus far, then, everything was satisfactory ; but the important question was to be decided whether Mick could obtain leave to marry. He himself was rather dubious on this point, for he had been in trouble more than once lately, and besides, the complement of the dépôt in the matter of married people was made up ; but if he couldn't get the leave when he asked for it, "Shure," said Mick, "I'll marry the darlint without lave, in spite of all the officers in the sarvice, and be d——d to them."

Next morning Mick formed up to the adjutant and requested permission to see the colonel. The adjutant made an effort to extract from him for what purpose the request was made ; but Mick knew how far an adjutant's ill word went sometimes, and discreetly refused to commit himself. After the great man had disposed of what are

called at police-courts "the charges of the night," Sullivan was introduced into his presence, and the nature of his business demanded.

"Plase yer honour, Sur, I want to get married," was Mick's reply.

"And, plase yer honour, Mr. Sullivan," answered the colonel, "you shan't get married, if I can help it."

"Och, Sur, and how can ye be so cruel, at all, at all?"

"Why, what the devil do you want with a wife?" asked the colonel.

"Shure, Sur, hwhat does any man want wid a wife?"

The adjutant burst into a splutter of laughter behind the colonel's back, and that stern officer found his gravity severely taxed. But he was firm in his refusal to grant the indulgence, and poor Mick came forth from the

presence in a very doleful frame of mind. During the stable hour, he communicated to Hector the bad success of his application ; and after dinner he told him that he had made up his mind to get married without leave the very next day, and the " colonel might go to the divil and shake himself." It was not of the slightest avail that Hector exerted all his powers of dissuasion. Mick was a perfect mule when his mind was made up, and Hector could only wish him well out of it without a court-martial.

At watch-setting Mr. Sullivan was reported " absent." Now the adjutant of the depôt was a very old bird, and knew in a moment what Mick's little game was. The sergeant-major and he concerted a plot whereby they might balk him at the very moment his cup of bliss was at his lips. At nine o'clock next morning about a dozen

corporals and as many files of men mustered outside the orderly room. To each place in the town licensed for the celebration of marriages a corporal and a file were told off, with orders to watch outside, and intercept Sullivan if he should appear in the capacity of bridegroom. The scheme was a clever, although an awfully heartless one—but for all its cleverness it came very near failing. The detachment to which was committed the duty of watching a small chapel in the outskirts of the town thought it very improbable that such a place would be selected by Sullivan, and so they went into a public-house in the neighbourhood, where they fell into some good company, and had almost forgotten the purpose for which they had been detailed. It was, however, suddenly recalled to their recollection. A rustic came in, and calling for a pint of beer, casually

mentioned that a "sojer was being spliced over the road." The moment was a critical one, but the corporal was equal to the occasion. Hastily marching out his men, he stationed them at the door, while he himself entered, and, walking up to the marriage-party unobserved, clapped his hand on Sullivan's shoulder just as he was fumbling in his pocket for the ring. The bride shrieked, the clergyman talked about sacrilege, and the bride's mother made a furious onslaught on the corporal with her umbrella; but he was firm, and Mick, whose sense of discipline was very strong, merely remarked, "Be jabbers, corporal, an' in another minute ye would have been too late!" Ultimately the party amicably adjourned to the beer-house kept by the bride's father, and after sundry "pots round," Mick was marched off into barracks, looking somewhat rueful at being

thus torn from the very horns of the altar.

He went before the colonel next morning, who mercifully let him off with the minor infliction of fourteen days' pack-drill. Mick did not mind the pack-drill very much, but then he was confined to barracks while doing the punishment, and had no opportunity of seeing his charmer. Hector tried to persuade him to give up the idea of getting married at all after the failure of this, his first essay; but Mick was firm, and very nearly quarrelled with Hector over the subject. So the latter had to desist from any further expostulations, and suffered Mick to take his own swing.

Mick had finished his pack-drill, and had liberty again to go out of barracks, a privilege of which he was not slow to avail himself; but as he could not go out without special leave (which was withheld from him) before

evening, he had no opportunity of getting married, unless by special licence, a luxury which Mick could not afford to indulge in. Nevertheless, he did not abandon his design, but only waited for a favourable opportunity to carry it into effect. This happened at length.

The men of the dépôt who were not at riding-school were exercising their horses one morning in watering order outside the barracks. Mick was among the number, and the poor fellow was suddenly taken very seriously ill. He felt so poorly, indeed, that his sergeant-major permitted him to return at once to barracks, giving him strict orders to go to hospital the moment he arrived. In due time Mick's *horse*, indeed, cantered into barracks, but there was no rider upon its back. The sentry on the gate gave the alarm, and the guard, thinking Mick had

been thrown, made a search for him along the road outside, but they did not find him, for the reason that at the time he was being thus looked for he was being married. The ceremony was this time duly accomplished without interruption; but in the course of the afternoon Mick's hymeneal festivities were rudely broken in upon by a picquet from the dépôt, who tore him ruthlessly from the arms of his bride, and escorted him to the guardroom door.

Mick had seven days' cells for this escapade; and when he next saw his bride he had a head as bald as a turnip, the provost-sergeant having taken the opportunity of making a selection of a lock of his hair, by the preliminary expedient of cutting it all off together. Still, he had a wife; but any matrimonial felicity seemed as far off as ever. Mick had married without leave,

and there was no place for his wife in barracks. Indeed, with a refinement of cruelty, her name “was put upon the gate”—*i. e.*, the sentry on that post was forbidden to give her admission. Mick could get no leave of absence; so he could only be in the society of his spouse from seven till ten in the evening; and so, on the whole, he might just as well have been single—indeed, better, if we take the wife’s welfare into consideration; but as Mick philosophically remarked, he was always a “tundherin’ fool.”

CHAPTER XX.

ONE day, when Mick was in the guard-room, Hector was sitting on his bed cleaning a pair of spurs, and thinking of Mary Home, of, or, better still, from whom he would have given anything to hear, when a pale-faced, gentlemanly-looking lad entered the barrack-room. He was evidently fresh from home, and the uncouth appearance of the barrack seemed to strike dismay into his soul. It was evidently with an effort that he restrained himself from bursting into tears, when a gang of young ruffians surrounded him, clamorously demanding that he should pay his footing; and

the scared, appealing glance from his soft brown eyes roused Hector's compassion. He rose, and went up to the lad in a friendly spirit, sending the most importunate of the clamourers to the right about with something between a blow and a shove, and telling the others they ought to be ashamed of themselves—a sentiment echoed by one or two old soldiers who happened to be in the room. Having thus rescued the young fellow from his tormentors, he took him with him to his bed, where he sat him down, telling him to keep his heart up and look on the cheerful side of his situation. The tears rose into the lad's eyes as he pressed Hector's friendly hand, and as if rejoiced to have met someone to whom he could unbosom himself, he immediately began to relate to Hector his little history. It was not a long one. He had been the pet

of a fond mother. His father was a stern man, immersed in business, and taking no interest in his home. Mother and son were all in all to each other, and the boy grew up, of a delicate frame of body, and with a mind as feminine as a girl's, from lack of association with the youth of his own sex. When he was about fifteen his mother fell into a decline, and after a long illness died in her son's arms. She had not been a year dead when the father married again, and the second wife was a woman of a grasping, coldly-calculating disposition. She had been a widow, and had children of her own, and it seemed as if the main aim of her life was to embitter the existence of the son of the woman who had been her predecessor. The lad bore long with her, but at length her tyranny became insufferable, and he appealed to his father. He gained nothing by this

step, save that he alienated him also. The unfeeling answer was that he never interfered in domestic matters, which were the province of his wife ; and if anybody was so peculiarly constituted as to dislike her treatment, an alternative was quite open, in the shape of withdrawing from its sphere. After this, the step-mother's ill-will was manifested still more strongly, and at length the poor lad shook the dust of his father's house from off his feet, and went out into the world. Unable to see any way of obtaining a livelihood, he had enlisted ; but, as he assured Hector, had he had the smallest conception of the roughness and brutality of barrack life, he would have died in a ditch sooner than have taken the step. Hector tried his best to encourage and rally him. He was not the only one, he told him, in whose heart the first sight of the barrack-room had

struck dismay and disgust; but use would effect wonders in removing the keenness of the impression, and there was nothing for it but courageously to make the best of what it was too late to help. The young man thanked Hector very sincerely for his consolatory observations, but they did not appear to operate on him with any great success. He fell into a profound melancholy, and seemed to become careless of what became of him. A recruit who does this might as well go hang himself at once. The sergeant who had fraternised with Hector the first night he joined, and who had not since vouchsafed him a look of acknowledgment, while oblivion seemed to pervade his mind on the subject of the half-sovereign he had borrowed, took the pale-faced, moping young fellow under his particular charge. Not for any good, however, but with a single eye to

badger and torment him on every possible occasion. The lad was no doubt very dull, and quite unfitted for a soldier; but a little seasonable blindness, and a word or two of encouragement on the part of a non-commissioned officer, would have worked a wonderful effect. But this sergeant, from the hour the recruit got out of his civilian's clothes, badgered and bullied him incessantly. He never could do anything right. The longer time he spent grooming his horse, the dirtier it seemed to get in the sergeant's eyes—his bed was always awry, his kit always crooked, his saddle always in bad order. The poor fellow's existence was a very burden to him. Even when he did well he got no credit for it, and it is little wonder that seeing this to be the case, he soon lost any desire to try. Often and often would he come to Hector with tears in his eyes, and

declare that he was determined to end his misery somehow; and then Hector and honest Mick would try to cheer him up, and gave him a hand at his work, which, from his awkward way, he dirtied as fast as he cleaned. Hector thought it would be a good plan if the lad were to report the sergeant's tyranny to the captain; but Mick dissuaded him strongly from this course, assuring him that he would never take any good by it. At last one day things came to a crisis. The sergeant was bullying the miserable recruit as usual, who was chafing inwardly as he groomed his horse. Taking up a bridoon which the latter had just spent half an hour in cleaning, he contemptuously asked whether he thought that cleaned, and then wantonly threw it into a bucket of water. The young fellow's wrath boiled over. Snatching up a pitchfork, he brought it down on the ser-

geant's head with all his force, and sent him on his back in the gutter. Of course there could be but one issue out of this—the guard-room and a court-martial.

About three weeks after this occurrence a full-dress parade was read out in orders. After the muster, the men were marched into the riding-school, and ranged in a double file along three sides. On the fourth side were rigged the triangles, and the farriers stood by with short staves in their hands, from the upper end of which hung a long bundle of knotted cords. The commandant and the subordinate officers stood in the centre in a group, and before them, advanced a pace from between the file of men which formed his escort, stood Hector's hapless friend, waiting, cap in hand, to hear the sentence of his court-martial.

Slowly and deliberately, making every

sentence tell, did the commandant read the summary of the proceedings, the pale-faced lad before him gazing meanwhile on his moving lips with a spell-bound intensity. At length he read the sentence, FIFTY LASHES, and crushing up the papers in his hand, he uttered the signal word, "Strip." In another moment the lad was tied up. As the vicious cords whistle through the air, and the slow reckoning, "one," "two," "three," of the farrier, fell upon Hector's ears, a deadly sickness came over him, and his brain span round. When he came to himself he was outside the riding-school, and four men were passing out on their way to hospital with an inanimate mass wrapped up in a cloak.

The lad recovered so far as to admit of his being transferred from hospital to a military prison, where he was to undergo a term of imprisonment. The greater part of

this further punishment, however, he evaded, for the simple reason that he died before he had been two months in prison. And then eight men bore his coffin aloft, and a charger followed it, and the band played the "Dead March in Saul," and the firing party fired three volleys over the grave of the hapless boy-recruit, out of whom tyranny and the cat-o'-nine-tails had crushed the green young life.

CHAPTER XXI.

SOON after Mick lost his hair and found a wife, Hector was dismissed for riding-school drill. He had some time before finished his course of foot-drill—so he was now advanced to the rank and dignity of a “full private.” He now liked the service a good deal better than he had done at first. He felt that he now knew his work and could do it; he had never done an hour’s punishment, and stood very well with the officers of the dépôt. But he longed now to be with the regiment more than ever, for he felt, now that he was a “dismissed man,” that every day spent at the dépôt was a day

lost to him. It therefore gave him inexpressible pleasure when, about a month after he had been dismissed, it was noised abroad that the order had come down from the Horse Guards to prepare a draft to be sent out to India. The news was true. In a couple of days more a grand muster was held, and the men picked out who were to compose the draft. Among the number were Hector and Mick—the former of whom was in great spirits—the latter, when he thought of the separation which was to come from his newly-made wife, was for a time inclined to be despondent, but eventually rallied himself, with the aid of sundry consolatory aphorisms, one of which was the somewhat irrelevant assertion that “care killed a cat.”

But before our young soldier left the shores of Old England he was destined to

experience a taste of the highest pleasure which can fall to the lot of the cavalry soldier upon home service. He had often listened to the old soldiers talking of "going on the line of march"—how glorions it was to leave a station some fine morning, and march, perhaps, from Hounslow to Edinburgh, or from Sheffield to Shorncliffe, taking nearly a month on the road, riding through fine country scenery and through large towns, being rid of the dull routine of the barracks all this time, and experiencing all the pleasurable excitement of a lottery with regard to billets. Sullivan, especially, was full of reminiscences of pleasant marches and jovial billets of "good towns"—all towns being good, in honest Mick's eyes, where beer was plentiful and the girls capable of appreciating dragoons—of singing-matches on the road, of free-

hearted captains, and of sergeant-majors who never trouble to beat up distant billets. He lamented greatly that his young comrade should leave England without an opportunity of tasting the sweetness of the line of march. Mick was an Irishman, and national enough in most things; but his patriotism did not wholly blind him.

“England, me lad! That’s the counthree for the loine av march. Ye get into yer snug billet, an’, faix, before ye’ve got the crunkles out av yer ligs, out comes the jolly landlord into the shtable wid a moighty big foamín’ jug o’ beer, an’ tills ye to dhrink hearty, for there’s plinty more hwhere that come fram; thin he hauls ye inside, an’ there’s the missis wid more beer, avick, an’ bread an’ chaise, till the dinner be ready, an’ lots av bumpkins a-starin’ at the sodgers wid the hoigth av respect, an’ deloighted,

sure, for to save thim a hand's-turn av throuble. Thin, it's in to yer hot male ye go—none av yer maisley eggs an' bacon, or nasty snausingers; but accordin' to the Quane's riglations, a pound av good solid hot mate a man, wegurtables to match, an' aither a pint av strang ale or a quart av swipes—whichever ye plase, me lad. But the English landlords don't bother wid the wates an' scales, sure. They clap ye down fornint a lump av beef an' a big pitcher av beer, an' till ye to pig away till ye can't hould no more. The tinpence the Quane gives thim for aitch man don't pay thim; but the English have the warm heart to the souldier, an' thrate him wid a free heart like a foightin' cock. An' thin at night, afther a bit av a sing-song wid the respectful yokels, ye go to bid in a snug room wid clane sheets an' saft matthresses, an', bedad,

ye think ye're in heaven bodily. An' hwhat's betther still, ould son, ye've yer full pay all the time ye're on the road widout a ha'porth av stoppage; ad' sure hwhat more could a prince wish for at all, at all? Now in Oirland, again, it's a different shtory intoirely. Hwhat the divil's the raison I don't know, but ye don't get niver a hot male on the road there, an' only a lousy truppence to buy ye one. I rickon this was fixed whin things was chape in Oirland; when ye cud buy a pig for a shillin', an' a dozzen av eggs for a copper—but troth, times is changed now, an' divil a chaper is anything there nor here. So it's as thrue as the gaspel that ye've to spind ivery penny av yer pay in puttin' grub inside ye, an' not a mag have ye left for beer; an' me jewels av counthrymen know too much about souldiers, an' are not so free at thratin' thim as the English

are. It's the funniest places intoirely ye get billeted in—the shtables are ould hen-houses sometimes, an' as for the billets, bedad, they're sometimes liker pigstyes. It's the gaspel truth I'm tellin' ye, Heckthor, 'at on the line av march in Oirland the ounly sure way to kape free av varmin is to slape as bare as whin ye came into the world, stick the butt-end av your carbine into the wather-basin, an' tie yer clothes, shirt an' all, round the muzzel av it. Bedad, an' thin it's hard work it is. But sure it's mesilf would dearly like a bit av a march wid ye before we start for India ; but I'm afeard there's no such luck."

But Mick was wrong—he was to have a taste of "the line of march" before sailing. Some great ceremonial was to come off at Southampton, and a detachment of five-and-twenty men were sent for from Canterbury.

Most of those selected for this service were old soldiers, but one or two of the youngsters were also picked out, and among them was our friend Hector. He had by this time got a better horse than the old "Bone-setter," now relegated to the torture of some newer recruit; and it is little wonder that from all he had heard of the pleasures of the road he should have been glad that his name was read out among the selected ones.

At five o'clock one delicious summer morning, "boots and saddles" were sounded by the concentrated trumpet power of the dépôt. Valises had all been packed, cloaks rolled, corn sacks folded, the night before, and there was nothing to be done in the morning but place these articles in the proper positions upon the pommels and cantels of the saddles. Sullivan was an old hand, and soon had all his traps in position,

and the sheepskin snugly housing all, and then he went off to see that his comrade was all right. As Mick explained to Hector, there is a good deal involved in the proper fastening of the valise and cloak upon the saddle. If the centre baggage and cloak straps are not tightened sufficiently to keep the friction off the horse's back, it is amazing how soon a sore back is the consequence of the negligence; and then the dragoon has his punishment in having to walk and forlornly lead the quadruped he ought to be proudly riding. And it is a very different thing to put the kit on for an ordinary marching-order parade and for a ride of some twenty miles. You may fancy at starting you are all right, and when you come to look round after a five mile trot, you are horrified to find the centre of the saddle bags right down upon the numnah,

and mayhap already a very awkward bump raised upon the horse's back. Care and experience are the means of counteracting so awkward a condition of affairs, and Sullivan was determined to see that, if he could prevent it, his chum should not find himself in it. He did not find much to alter about that young soldier's handiwork, for Hector had profited by the instructions he had received, and was already a capital hand at putting on a kit. Work done in the stables, and the horses turned round in their stalls ready for bridling up, the two comrades went up into the barrack-room, dressed, and put their belts on, and were standing at their horses' heads, quite ready when the trumpet sounded "Turn out." After being closely inspected by the commanding officer and the adjutant, the subaltern, who had the command of the detachment, took his

place at its head, gave the word "threes right," and away they marched merrily out of barracks, the early morning sun flashing on their drawn swords as they passed the guard. The officer knew the country well, and almost immediately after the rear-guard had cleared the barracks, he struck off into a fine green lane, which slanted pleasantly up the side of a gentle slope. Hector thought he had never enjoyed anything so much since he had joined the army. There had been a shower of rain early in the morning, just sufficient to lay the dust, and evoke from every growing thing its sweetest scent. The fresh crisp morning air was laden with perfume—the wild rose, the jessamine, and the eglantine entwined themselves about the gnarled thorn of the hedgerows, and sent their tangled feelers straggling up the ivy-clad trunks of the

great elms and oaks which reared themselves at intervals along the hedgerows. From the bottom of the valley arose a feathery mist, broken into gossamer-like patches of many-coloured hues by the slanting beams of the morning sun; and here and there the blue smoke of some early-lit cottage fire ascended in a languid straightness through the still air. The hind yoking his plough in the adjacent field was chanting a rude bucolic ditty, and his driver emitted a cloud of tobacco smoke, the scent of which came drifting across the road with that peculiar fresh odour only possessed by tobacco-smoke in the early morning. As the little troop crowned the height, another fair and fertile expanse of country lay stretched out in front—trees and corn-fields and red-roofed homesteads, and long reaches of still water, and the pointed spire of the

little church shooting up through the foliage which overhung the hamlet and the churchyard. Then the officer sung out "Trot," and away they went merrily bumping, their accoutrements jingling and clanking, their horses feeling the bit lightly, arching their necks, and stepping out gallantly, as if they too liked to be on the road. Three miles of a round trot, and after a halt to tighten girths and examine the position of saddlebags, then up into the saddle again. Now the officer has a cheery consultation with the sergeant-major, which results in the welcome command, "Singers to the front;" whereupon every man who possesses, or thinks he possesses, the capacity for singing, presses forward to the front, till the two front ranks are six abreast across the road. Then the great vocalist—self-constituted or elected—strikes up a solo possessing the

merit of furnishing unlimited chorus; and so singing lustily, they march through the next village, bringing to the doors all the aboriginal population, and attracting much attention and commendation, especially from the fair sex. The day's march half over, the officer, selecting the vicinity of a little wayside public-house, calls a halt, and sends his servant on in advance, who speedily returns accompanied by the rural Boniface and his rosy-cheeked daughter, carrying a goodly pail apiece with foaming beer within it. Each man receives a pint, and no more, the gift of the officer; except the big farrier's assistant, who, in consideration of his great size, and presumed capacity, therefore, of greater absorption, gets an extra horn. Then, in the highest good-humour they make a fresh start, after a chase has been made in pursuit of the steed of some luckless

fellow who has forgot to keep his hold of the bridoon; and by-and-by they reach the outskirts of the town where they are to be billeted for the night, and drawing swords, sitting up into position again, and closing up regimentally, they march right gallantly through the principal street up to the chief hotel. Here they find the corporal who has gone on in advance, with his hands full of billeting papers; which he distributes impartially—one to every two men. There is a great effort made by chums to get together, and Sullivan and Hector, having succeeded in this, wend their way quietly down to a side street leading to the river, and, under the guidance of an awe-stricken small boy, arrive at length at the “Wheat-sheaf.” The sturdy landlord of this hostelry brings forth, before they dismount, a big brown jar of honest home-brewed, and

after heartily drinking their health himself, hands the concern up to Mick, whose countenance becomes temporarily eclipsed. Emerging, so to speak, with a sigh of satisfaction, he hands the jug to Hector, who is likewise quite ready for a good pull, and then they file into the stable-yard and dismount. They take off their kits at once, and loosen the girths; but must not remove the saddles from their horses for a couple of hours, for fear of sore backs; and so, in the meantime, they do extremity grooming, after having first refreshed the inner man with a modicum of bread and cheese. Presently they get their belts and arms rubbed over and all ready for next morning, then it is time for the saddles to come off and the body grooming got at; and by the time all this is done, and the fresh straw shaken down belly deep around the horses, which

straightway lie down for an ecstatic roll, the officer and the sergeant-major look in, inquire affectionately after the horses' backs, and then, having mentioned the hour of parade for next morning, depart. The two chums have a wash, and then a stroll down by the pleasant river, and a beatific lounge upon the old bridge, till presently a boy makes his appearance and tells them dinner is ready. They go in, not to the tap-room or second-rate room of any kind; but into the sanctum sanctorum of the little bar parlour, where the good old landlord is found occupying one end of the table, and the comfortable dame his wife the other, the sides being lined with the junior members of the family. Mr. Sullivan is upon his very best behaviour, and his romantic politeness, especially to the old lady, is something very edifying to witness, while he contrives also

to get on remarkably well with the giggling eldest daughter, who sits on his other side. The conversation is not very intellectual, but very manly and British. The old landlord and his wife have none of your cockney contempt for the soldier ; but, as a matter of course, consider him not only their equal, but a welcome guest ; and, as in duty bound, the soldier, if he is worth his salt, does his best to conduct himself so as not to falsify this good impression. Only when morning comes, and it is time to turn out again, Mr. Sullivan, in the exuberance of his kindly regard towards all the family, insists on kissing the female members of it all round, a ceremonial to which faint objections are made. One day's march is a repetition of the other, save when by some dreadful mischance they happen to drop upon a bad billet, where the folks are not

inclined to look with eyes of favour on the colour of our friends' cloth. Now it is that Mr. Sullivan asserts himself. He knows his rights, and he will have them. He reports the stable accommodation as wretched, the corn as bad. He contemptuously rejects the washy beer, and refuses to accept ham and eggs in substitution for his statutory allowance of beef. He, in short, returns churlishness with churlishness, and contrives, during the twelve or fourteen hours' stay, to make himself about as disagreeable as he conveniently can. He will not spend a penny of money in the "shabby" house, but actually goes next door and brings in the beer he wants to consume. He collects a company of admiring rustics, whom he marches off under convoy to some neighbouring house, where, by that mysterious freemasonry which transmits intelligence from billet to

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billet, he has learnt that the folks are more complaisant, and therefore deserving of more encouragement.

On one of these occasions, Mr. Sullivan keeps it up a little too jovially, forgetting to go to bed at all, and, in consequence, in the morning is not exactly in the position to cut "heads and posts" with scrupulous accuracy. Instead of confining him for "drunkenness on the line of march," a very serious offence, the good-natured officer merely dismounts him for the day; and so placed between a file of mounted men, with a corporal riding in the rear, Mick has to tramp the day's march on foot, ruefully leading his horse, and regarded by all and sundry of the rustics passed upon the road as a "prisoner" going to condign and remorseless execution. What the little detachment has to do at Southampton in the

way of trotting alongside the carriage of his Serene Mumbo Jumboship the Crown Prince of Timbuctoo, it does with credit and dash, and then marches quietly home again to Canterbury, most of the fellows having solemnly promised marriage on at least half a dozen several occasions during their short march. And so Hector obtains a knowledge before leaving England of what the "line of march" is really like; and, as a whole, not having to look back either upon undue indulgence in potent ale, or upon vows pledged only to be broken, he owned to himself that he wished he could remain upon the march till such time as the order which he was very anxious for should come, ordering him to join his regiment in India.

About a week after the return from Southampton, the general in command of

the district made a formal inspection of the selected draft, and pronounced it, as a matter of course, to consist of a "fine lot of men;" and the next morning, under the command of a young cornet, who was also going out to join the regiment, it was escorted to the railway by the band of the dépôt, which played "The girls we left behind us" first, and then, as a corrective to the dejection this suggestive melody might be supposed to generate, struck up "Cheer, boys, cheer!" Hector left the dépôt without a single regret. He had seen much in it which shocked and disgusted him, and nothing at all which might have had a contrary effect. The only man it would have given him pain to part from was honest Mick, and "shure" wasn't Mick going with him? He would have given the world for some news from Scotland ere he adventured on the wild waste

of waters, which, as he imagined, for many a day divided him from her he loved; but he had been afraid to make any confidant there prior to leaving it, and the same fear had deterred him from writing to any one since his enlistment.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



